

MontessoriPublic.org

BRINGING MONTESSORI INTO THE PUBLIC CONVERSATION IN PRINT AND ONLINE • MONTESSORIPUBLIC.ORG • FALL 2023 • VOL 8 NUMBER 1

Montessori as an innovation model

A former superintendent's take on what districts want



DAVID AYER WITH
MARGARITA RUIZ

Margarita Ruiz was a District Superintendent in Massachusetts Public Schools before she joined the NCMPBS Board of Directors. *MontessoriPublic* sat down to talk about her background and Montessori story, and her perspective from the district side. Our conversation has been condensed and edited.

MontessoriPublic: Tell me your Montessori story—how did you first learn about the approach?

Margarita Ruiz: I had a nephew, now in his 40s, who attended a private

Montessori preschool. Even though I was not in the classroom with him, I could tell that the education he was getting was different from what I was seeing in other schools. (By the way, my nephew right now is a highly successful restaurateur in New York City!)

Later, when I got married and had my son, as a parent I wanted my son to go to a Montessori school because I knew how rich the experience is.

The problem was that at that time the Montessori schools that I had access to were private schools and unfortunately my husband and I, first generation Hispanic/Latino immigrants—he worked the ramp for Continental Airlines and I was a schoolteacher—we were not in a financial position to pay for private school.

So my son ended up in conventional public school, and he had a good education, but I always had in the back of my mind that we didn't have access.

I stayed as a teacher in Boston public schools for close to 22 years, and then I became a Principal and then an Area Superintendent. In 2013 I was overseeing the schools in the area of East Boston



An innovative approach

and Charlestown under the leadership of the Superintendent, Dr. Carol Johnson. There was a district early childhood center with a very popular Montessori strand, and a group of school parents wanted to re-open a closed building as a full public Montessori school. Dr. Johnson said, "Yes! We're going to move

on with this."

As Area Superintendent I was in charge of ensuring that that school opened up. I was really excited because it was a chance to give kids like my son an opportunity to experience a

continues on page 10 >

Ideal Learning for children of color

A new study sees benefits and room for growth



IHEOMA IRUKA AND
KATIE BROWN

In fall of 2021, we wrote here in *MontessoriPublic* about a study we were undertaking called *Ideal Learning for All: Examining the Experiences of Children of Color in Ideal Learning Settings*. Data collection for the study was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the

study has finally been completed. In this issue, we're back to provide a preliminary report on what we learned.

Background

The purpose of this study was to document the experiences of children of color in so-called "Ideal Learning" early childhood education settings. We know that education in the United States is rife with racialized disparities, including access to high-quality early learning experiences, opportunities to learn, racial segregation, and exclusionary discipline. Scholars have long pointed to early childhood education as a critical first opportunity to disrupt these patterns of inequity in children's schooling. Yet studies of outcomes for children in state-funded traditional preschool pro-

grams and schools have been, at best, mixed, and, too often, disappointing.

Ideal Learning models, such as Montessori, seem to hold promise for reducing outcome disparities. The Ideal Learning Roundtable, an early childhood education consortium established by the Trust for Learning, has articulated eight Principles of Ideal Learning which "allow for multiple approaches, models, and traditions, and take into account the varied contexts within which early educators and care providers work." Ideal Learning approaches embody these eight principles:

- Decision-making reflects a commitment to equity
- Children construct knowledge from

continues on page 12 >

NOW ENROLLING

AMI Diploma Courses

ELEMENTARY (AGES 6-12)
ASSISTANTS TO INFANCY (AGES 0-3)

Expand your opportunities by earning a Whitworth master's degree while completing your AMI diploma in a blended format. Our new blended-format programs offer a combination of face-to-face and online instruction, with full-time immersive training experiences. An option to earn your Washington state teaching credential with additional requirements is available for some programs.

Apply now. Space is limited.



NATIONAL CENTER for
MONTESSORI in the
PUBLIC SECTOR

MACTE accredited



whitworth.edu/montessori | montessori-nw.org



Teacher training...

Public School style

We have the most experience training teachers with online technologies. Since 2008, CGMS has been helping public schools, school districts, and charter schools around the country with low-residency training for every level. We know your environments. We respect your environments.

Contact us to find out more!

www.cgms.edu

info@cgms.edu

1-888-344-7897



Nienhuis MONTESSORI

The Global Standard

Nienhuis Montessori is the leading manufacturer of Montessori materials worldwide. For over 85 years, we have produced materials that contribute to the responsible development of the child as a whole.

Find more online: nienhuis-usa.com

2022 Montessori Public - **Free Shipping** on all items through Oct 31st, 2022.
Use the discount code **MP2022** during checkout.
**Please contact us for international shipments - restrictions may apply*

Free Shipping with discount code MP2022

The logo for Nienhuis Montessori, featuring the word "nienhuis" in a lowercase, sans-serif font with a red dot above the 'i', and "montessori since 1929" in a smaller font below it.

Nienhuis Montessori, A Heutink brand
600 E. Luchessa Avenue - Gilroy, CA 95020
Phone 1-650-964-2735 Email info@nienhuis-usa.com

Montessori in the mainstream

Not only
accepted,
but expected



SARA SUCHMAN

NCMPS's 2023 annual report is titled Mainstreaming Montessori. NCMPS is working for Montessori to be not only an accepted but an expected public option for every family and community.

Over the summer two meta-analyses were published showing the positive impact of a Montessori education: One from the highly influential Campbell Systematic Reviews, and the other in a well-respected mainstream journal, Contemporary Educational Psychology.

Last year, globally recognized Bloomsbury publishing house put out the Bloomsbury Handbook of Montessori Education, featuring in-depth analysis from a wide spectrum of Montessori voices, including former Executive Director of AMS and NCMPS Board member Richard Ungerer and NCMPS Director of Research and Professional Learning Katie Brown.

When I began my doctoral studies on public Montessori in 2006, there was so little research on Montessori that I was unable to include a Montessori literature review. Two decades later, we have research on Montessori and academic outcomes, adult well-being, enjoyment of school, executive function, racial differences, socio-economic differences, creativity, and more.

Publication by publication, school by school, media outlet by media outlet, Montessori is moving off of the periphery and into the mainstream.

We are succeeding. Should we be celebrating?

In 2008, I attended the research session at the American Montessori Society (AMS) conference in Washington, DC. I was a new scholar in the midst of conducting research on public Montessori schools. A comment was made that, though I don't remember who made it, has stuck with me. The speaker put forward the supposition that Montessori has survived as long as it has and as intact as it has because it has flown under the radar, making it immune from and impervious to outside influences that might corrupt or undermine it.

I took note. I was committed to children and families in public settings having access to Montessori but did not want to contribute to Montessori's downfall. I knew that public expansion would mean public scrutiny, and I was seeing in my research how the external pressures manifested in the classroom. Private dollars buy private accountability. Public dollars bring public accountability. (This dynamic may be shifting as funding streams, delivery systems, and the line between private and public blurs, but that is grist for a different reflection.)

Yet, despite the trepidation I felt 15 years ago in Washington, DC, I am still here, working with public systems that want to better serve students through Montessori. What have I seen?

There is a role for all of the players in the U.S. Montessori ecosystem. We didn't plan it out ahead of time; we happened our way into it. Independent schools serve thousands of children and families and show what can be done in the absence of constraints. The folk working in independent schools are peers who share professional development, school

visits, materials, etc. They are one piece of the puzzle in demonstrating that Montessori is a good thing – it is such a good thing that families will pay for it, often at great financial sacrifice. This is an important step in increasing access – If Montessori is good for those with financial means, no one who checks their biases can ethically and honestly say Montessori wouldn't be good for all children.

More Montessori creates more Montessori. Families want what is best for their children. As more hear, see, and learn about Montessori, whether through public or private schools, more will want it in both public and private schools.

Montessori isn't precious, it is robust. Its fundamental view of childhood can accommodate and tolerate a lot of imposition, compromise, and less-than-ideal structures and practices and still offer so much more and better than other models to children and families. Is ideal ideal? As defined by core principles and with an eye for equity and honesty, Yes. Does NCMPS work with schools to keep moving ever closer to this ideal? Yes. Do we stop pursuing this approach for all children, even in light of there being some schools that now, and perhaps always, struggle to reach full implementation? No.

So, here I am. With you. Until Montessori is not only accepted but expected in every district, neighborhood, and authorizer's portfolio and every families' choices.

Sara Suchman is the Executive Director of the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector.



BRINGING MONTESSORI INTO THE
PUBLIC CONVERSATION
FALL 2023
VOLUME 8, NUMBER 1

- 1 **Montessori as an innovation model**
DAVID AYER WITH MARGARITA RUIZ
- 1 **Ideal Learning for children of color**
IHEOMA IRUKA AND KATIE BROWN
- 3 **Montessori in the mainstream**
SARA SUCHMAN
- 4 **A changing education mindset in Utah**
KACEE WEAVER
- 6 **Public Montessori: What is essential?**
NCMPS STAFF
- 8 **At the beginning is a good place to be**
PAULA LILLARD PRESCHLACK AND PAULA POLK LILLARD
- 14 **Residency: A new model for training**
LAURE FLEMING
- 16 **Research backs the Montessori 3-year cycle**
SONYA HEMMEN, RYAN MARKS, AND KATIE BROWN
- 18 **Montessori Public Advocacy 23–24**
VYJU KADAMBI AND DENISE MONNIER
- 19 **Rigorous meta-analysis says Montessori works**
DAVID AYER
- 20 **Book Review: VTS in Montessori Environments**
JOHN P. BROOME
- 22 **In Memoriam: Joan Peifer**
- 23 **We need your story!**
NCMPS STAFF
- 23 **THE PUBLIC CALENDAR**

COMING SPRING 2024:
**MORE PUBLIC
MONTESSORI NEWS**

Reach out to editor@montessoripublic.org

Our next issue will be in April, 2024.

More guidelines on page 23.

In this issue: Outcomes and achievements

Several articles in this issue touched on the theme of outcomes and achievements—the results of a new meta-analysis, a study looking at the three-year cycle, and an investigation into children of color in certain environments. Other articles round up news from around the Montessori world and offer new insights.

David Ayer shares the results of the largest Montessori study to date.

Jason P. Broome reviews Visual Thinking Strategies in Montessori Environments.

Laure Fleming describes the Public Montessori Teacher Residency Consortium.

Sonya Hemmen, Ryan Marks, and Katie Brown report on research validating the effects of the three-year cycle.

Iheoma Iruka and Katie Brown report on the impact of Ideal Learning environments on children of color.

Vyju Kadambi and Denise Monnier report on the 2023 Montessori Public Policy Initiative Annual Conference.

Paula Polk Lillard and Paula Lillard Preschlack give guidance on getting a new class started.

Joan Peifer's friends share remembrances.

Margarita Ruiz shares her Montessori story and suggests Montessori as an innovation model.

Sara Suchman reflects on Montessori in the mainstream.

Kacee Weaver reports on Personalized Competency Based Learning in Utah.

A changing education mindset in Utah

Personalized Competency-Based Learning and Montessori



KACEE WEAVER

“Forget everything you learned at the University about how children learn and the best ways to teach them—this is the *REAL WORLD* and we have a test to take at the end of the year.”

of conflict while at recess (or the few times they were allowed to interact with one another) they were removed from the group and given a consequence.

Of course, children are adaptable, so they sat still and learned what they were supposed to learn and many performed well on the end of year exams. Year after year, grade-level after grade-level, these children sat and learned what they were told to learn. This continued even as the data began to show that their initial academic gains in kindergarten were not an indication of long-term academic advantage past 3rd grade and that such rigorous academic focus actually produced long-term harm, especially in the realms

through the K-12 system.” Portrait of a Graduate identifies *mastery*, *autonomy*, and *purpose* as the essential outcomes of a Utah public school graduate, aligning beautifully with Montessori’s model of education nurturing independence as an aid to life.

Promising new legislation, *Personalized Competency Based Learning (PCBL)* (R277), prioritizes ideals that mirror Dr. Montessori’s, Piaget, Vygotsky, Erikson (and others’) pedagogy:

- **Students are empowered daily to make important decisions** about their learning experiences, how they will create and apply knowledge, and how they will demonstrate their learning.
- **Assessment is a meaningful, positive, and empowering learning experience** for students that yields timely, relevant, and actionable evidence.
- Students receive **timely, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs**.

- **Students progress based on evidence of mastery**, not seat time.
- **Students learn actively using different pathways and varied pacing.**
- Strategies to ensure **equity for all students** are **embedded in the culture, structure, and pedagogy** of schools and education systems.
- Rigorous, common **expectations for learning** (knowledge, skills, and dispositions) **are explicit, transparent, measurable, and transferable**.

And finally we have legislation and funding that prioritizes the foundation of Montessori pedagogy and a return to DAP. Which is why I feel like this is a very exciting and important time to be part of public education!

Aurora Institute, Knowledge Works, Marzano Research, Modern Classrooms Project, and Education Reimagined are some of the organizations attempting to transform the traditional “sit and get” mindsets through their resources and consulting. I doubt any could be as comprehensive as Montessori training, but because of their work, I am able to refer

This is a very exciting and important time to be part of public education!

Those were the very first words that were said to me seventeen years ago, on the first day of my student teaching experience in a full-day, traditional kindergarten classroom; with an award-winning teacher, in the district’s top-performing school—and it still feels like a punch in the gut when I think about it.

During undergrad at Weber State University in Ogden, Utah, where I completed a dual bachelor degrees in Early Childhood Education and Elementary Education, I learned to observe and use children’s interests to build engaging, hands-on, learning experiences. I looked forward to intentionally planning for collaboration and problem-solving among students along with engaging and working with parents to create prepared and inspiring spaces for learning.

At the time, the term Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) was the only acronym I knew and it was embedded in every interaction as we studied pedagogical methods founded on brain science by education researchers past and present. We learned about Vygotsky’s *Zone of Proximal Development*, Erikson’s *8 Stages*, Maslow’s *Hierarchy*, and it’s where I twice heard Dr. Montessori’s name.

But, in the “real world”, I watched as these 5 and 6-year-olds spent the majority of their day sitting at desks, looking at the teacher, waiting to be told what to do and how to do it. If they complained

of social and emotional development.

It was also no surprise when these children from my 2006 student teaching experience graduated high school, moved into college and careers, and their professors and supervisors complained that they didn’t have the necessary “21st century skills”.

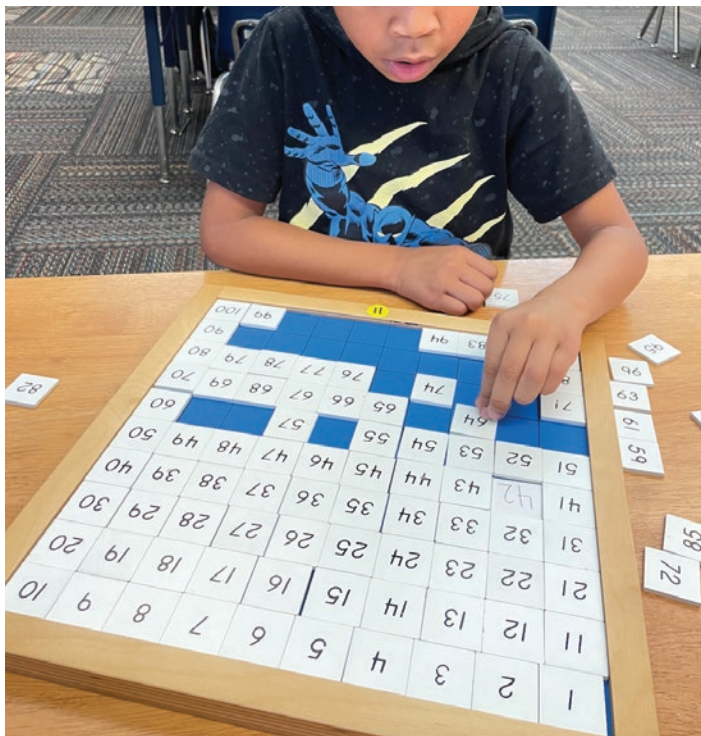
As we know, critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, emotional regulation, time management, and perseverance don’t just appear upon completion of traditional schooling or as a result of learning at home. Not only that but, pre-pandemic ACT scores indicate that only 42% of graduates were proficient in reading and 37% in math. Scores on this summative test continue to be stagnant today.

When Montessori found me in 2010 I discovered a community that valued children and the learning process the same way I did. After Montessori training, a M.Ed. from St. Catherine in Advanced Montessori Studies, working in Montessori charter and private schools, presenting at Montessori conferences, and serving on Montessori boards, I have returned to the district where I completed my student teaching and excitingly I can say the traditional education mindset is changing!

In Utah in 2019 the state board of education adopted Portrait of a Graduate as a holistic view of state education outcomes, “identifying the ideal characteristics of a Utah graduate after going



Students are empowered daily to make important decisions



Students progress based on evidence of mastery, not seat time

and Dynamic education) repository about using the Peace Table as conflict resolution in a restorative justice practice. I also recently spoke at the UCET (Utah Coalition for Educational Technology) conference about DAP, the prepared environment, the prepared adult and personalized learning experiences.

I don't have enough uninterrupted time or mixed age levels, and there's still an

over-prioritization of the test at the end, but I have been repeatedly encouraged to "do what is best for kids" by district administration. While Utah still doesn't recognize Montessori training toward state licensure, I am thrilled to see the elements of *wellness, communication, creativity and problem solving, service, honesty and integrity*, and most importantly, *lifelong learning and personal growth* as priorities of our public education system. As researchers continue to "discover" the science of learning is as relevant now as it was when Dr. Montessori observed it and people are listening.

A recent article in *Education Week* by Libby Stanford (*Every State Now Lets Schools Measure Students' Success Based on Mastery, Not Seat Time*, 5/31/23) celebrates the nation's movement toward PCBL and this is as encouraging for the public Montessori sector as it is the traditional one. These slow and small steps empower public Montessori programs to maintain authenticity by providing current research and best practices to legitimize the Montessori method. Now is the time to contact your school boards and legislators to share the incredible ways a Montessori education meets the individual needs of every child and creates competent and collaborative communities.

Kacee Weaver teaches kindergarten in the Ogden School District and was a 2021-2023 Utah Teacher Fellow.

to these like-minded schools of thought to bring my own Montessori training to my traditional kindergarten classroom.

We use the Hierarchy of Numbers to discover the immensity of one million. My students' favorite works are the cosmic nesting boxes and the one hundred board. Our science shelf is most beloved and the work rugs need to be replaced. I strive every day to bring nature, humanity, and independence into our classroom. District grant monies have purchased the Waseca Reading program and a bead cabinet. We were just given materials to incorporate a sand tray and we've been given *The End of Average* by Todd Rose and *Personal and Authentic* by Thomas Murray, as resources. These texts inspire individualized instruction through concrete experiences that connect children to the actual REAL WORLD through investigation and collaboration with peers and most importantly, instruction founded in brain science.

Horacio Sanchez, author of *The Education Revolution: How to Apply Brain Science to Improve Instruction and School Climate* spoke at this year's districtwide in-service, imploring us to focus on consistency, connection, and positive discipline. Additionally, education guru John Hattie, cites Jean Piaget's constructivist programs as highly effective in improving academic outcomes.

I've been asked to share the Peace Table practice with my colleagues, and our state will be adding a "promising practices" report to the ULEAD (Utah Leading through Effective, Actionable,

MONTESSORI public

BRINGING MONTESSORI INTO THE PUBLIC CONVERSATION

MontessoriPublic is a digital and print communications and advocacy platform for public Montessori, presenting news and information about public schools, publicly supported programs, public policy, and relevant ideas and events in education.

MontessoriPublic is distributed free of charge to every school listed in the Montessori Census (montessoricensus.org), as well as all MACTE-accredited teacher training centers, state and national Montessori organizations, and individual subscribers. Multiple copies are sent to public schools based on the number of teachers listed in the school's Census entry.

To subscribe, visit montessoripublic.org, enter your email address, and add your mailing address to your profile.

For advertising information, submission guidelines, or other communications, contact David Ayer at editor@montessoripublic.org.

Editorial Director: David Ayer

Contributors: David Ayer, John P. Broome, Katie Brown, Sonya Hemmen, Iheoma Iruka, Vyju Kadambi, Paula Polk Lillard, Ryan Mark, Denise Monnier, Paula Lillard Preschlack, Margarita Ruiz, Sara Suchman, and Kacee Weaver.

Publication design and production: Matt Giraud, Gyroscope Creative

MontessoriPublic is a publication of the

NATIONAL CENTER for
MONTESSORI in the
PUBLIC SECTOR

Noncommercial reproduction of material in this publication is permitted and encouraged. Please consult authors for rights to reprint copyrighted articles.

Copyright 2023 National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector

public-montessori.org

Montessori Resources Anytime. Anywhere.

Now CGMS offers affordable access to our videos, albums and other resources conveniently online. The Montessori Library also includes self study courses with CEUs available, as well as many materials that are exclusive to this service. Choose just what you want, and study at your own pace!

LEARN MORE AND SUBSCRIBE

www.montessorilibrary.com



Public Montessori: What is essential?

The long story of a collaborative document

NCMPS STAFF

You have probably seen a document somewhere with the words “Montessori” and “Essential” in the title—maybe more than one. And maybe you’re wondering which one is the “*essential* Essentials”, and how this state of affairs came to be.

There are at least 15,000 Montessori schools in the world. Given that these schools spring from the same source, you might not think there would be that much variation across programs. Just about everyone who is “doing Montessori” is working from a program initially presented largely by one person—passed down, via oral tradition as much as in published writing, through what remains a relatively small community. Within our community, we may have furious debates about which side of the table the ten bars go on, or whether certain materials belong with five-year-olds or seven-year-olds, but surely we agree on the essentials?

At first glance, multiple documents may seem confusing, but in truth each serves a different purpose. This is the story behind those documents.

As long as Montessori stayed mostly in private schools, this wasn’t too much of a problem. The different Montessori lineages, and sub-lineages, could make their own claims about authenticity and essentials, and people were free to choose the Montessori that suited them. In the US, a 1967 Patent and Trademark

Office ruling put the word Montessori squarely in the public domain.

But when Montessori began to move into the public sphere, the stakes and the stakeholders changed.

Fifty-six years since the opening of the first public Montessori program in the United States, there are now 574 public Montessori schools operating across the nation in 42 states and Puerto Rico. Desegregation efforts in the 1970s and 1980s provided urban school districts the opportunity to create Montessori magnet programs, and from the 1990s to the present day charter and district programs have increased the availability of public Montessori schools to more of the nation’s children and their families.

This presented the Montessori world with a novel problem: Now, people outside of and unfamiliar with Montessori cared about what it meant to have a Montessori classroom or school. And public programs had their own concerns: meeting state and district expectations, such as performance on standardized tests, that didn’t always align well with Montessori principles—independence, curiosity, focus and concentration, passion and joy - in short, human flourishing. Public programs were pressured to downplay Montessori principles and practices that seemed indistinct or unfamiliar in preference for the tried, if not true, standard practices, and to degrade Montessori, and its enormous impact on children, in the process. In response to this pressure in public schools away from Montessori and towards the norm, the Essential Elements were born.

1990s: “Essential Elements of Successful Montessori Schools in the Public Sector”

In the late 1990s, as public Montessori was undergoing its second wave of expansion, these concerns energized the Montessori world. The movement was somewhat fragmented, and there was a concern that districts or charters might look into the model only to discover competing Montessori organizations each advancing their own claim to legitimacy and authenticity—and then throw up their hands and walk away.

In a move towards collaboration that was unprecedented at the time, representatives from the American Montessori Society (AMS), Association Montessori International/USA (AMI/USA), North American Montessori Teacher’s Association (NAMTA), Montessori Education Programs International (MEPI), and the (now-defunct) Southwestern Montessori Training Center (SMTC) met to develop a set of design parameters and core principles of practice they could all agree on.

The result of this effort was the *Essential Elements of Successful Montessori Schools in the Public Sector*, endorsed by each organization and distributed to their respective communities. This document offered 22 guidelines across six domains, giving district and school leaders a consistent, if minimal, set of parameters that elided differences among organizations and training traditions. It was broad in scope and application, presumed some level of prior exposure to Montessori,

and generally emphasized *what to do* more than *how to do it*.

Implementation and advocacy

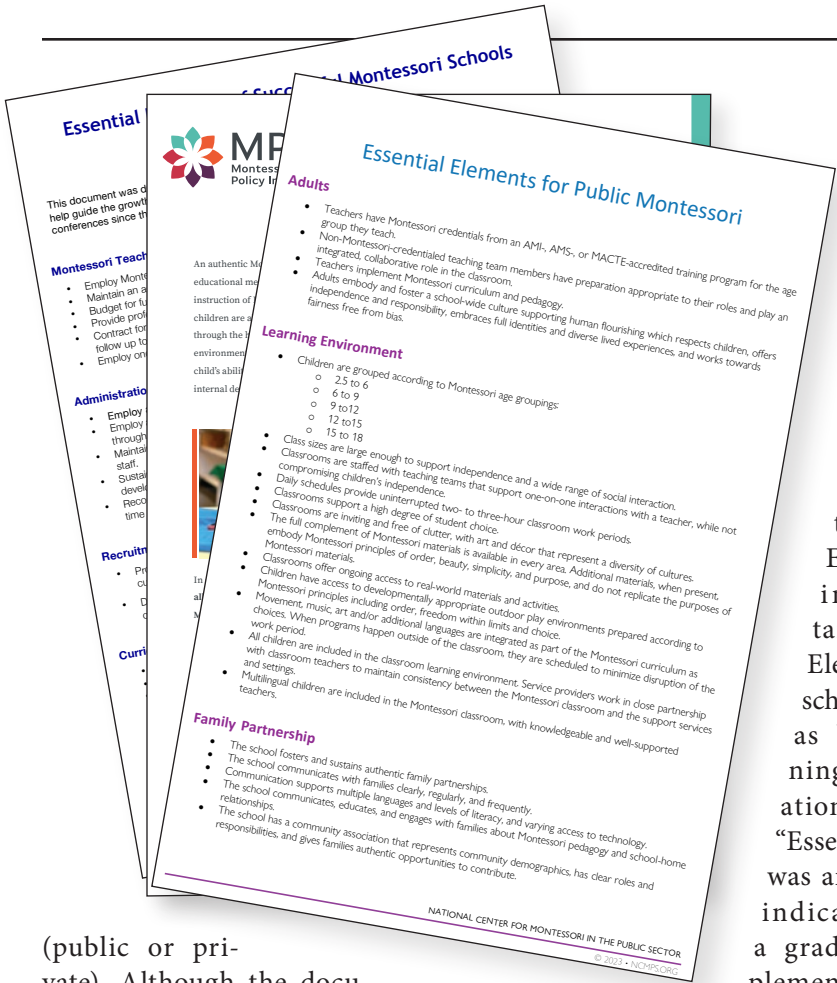
In 2012, the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector (NCMPS) was launched as a project of AMS to support the growth and sustainability of public Montessori programs in the US. With an original mission to “help public schools deliver high-quality, personalized education through Montessori”, the focus of NCMPS’ work was effective *implementation* with the research and policy to back it up. The following year, the Montessori Public Policy Initiative (MPPI) was created as a joint project of AMS and AMI/USA to serve as “the unified voice in *advocacy* and platform for coordination of public policy efforts.” These two organizations serve complementary needs. MPPI “champions a policy landscape that expands equitable access to high-fidelity Montessori education,” while NCMPS focuses on growing and developing the public Montessori ecosystem through equitable, accessible, and sustainable *implementation* in public settings.

2015: “Montessori Essentials”

In 2015, MPPI produced the “Montessori Essentials”, a two-page document using the 1990s document as a foundation and presenting 11 “critical elements that must be present”, plus an introductory paragraph that characterizes an “authentic” Montessori school, without reference to a funding model

From the 2015 Essential Elements Rubric: Domain 1 – Adults

STANDARD	EXEMPLARY	SATISFACTORY	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	UNSATISFACTORY
Teachers have Montessori credentials, from a MACTE or AMI accredited training program, for the age group they teach, in addition to required licenses or credentials.	□ All teachers are fully trained at the appropriate level and hold required licenses or credentials. □ All auxiliary staff (special education, PE) are Montessori trained or oriented. □ Montessori principles are evident in the actions of all adults. Key actions include: speaking softly, clearly, and respectfully to children and adults, refraining from offering unnecessary help, inviting as opposed to commanding, and student engagement in meaningful work.	□ 90% of teachers are fully trained at the appropriate level, with the remainder in the process of earning an appropriate Montessori credential. □ Auxiliary staff have been oriented in Montessori theory and practice. □ Montessori principles are evident in many, but not all adults' actions	□ 85% of all teachers are fully trained at the appropriate level, with the remainder in the process of earning an appropriate Montessori credential. □ Montessori principles are evident in some adults' actions.	□ Less than 85% of all teachers are fully trained at the appropriate level. □ Absence of robust knowledge of Montessori theory and practice is evident in the actions of adults; key actions include: interrupting students who are concentrating, using a loud, intrusive voice, attempting to control rather than model respectful behavior.



(public or private). Although the document speaks of “successful implementation,” it’s clearly also a work of advocacy, and a kind of position statement, saying, in effect, “This is what Montessori is. This is what Montessori schools must do to count as Montessori.”

2015: “NCMPS Essential Elements for Montessori in the Public Sector”

At the same time, NCMPS recognized the need for, in addition to an authenticity guide, an implementation guide that gave clarity and specificity for the public sector. We worked from prior documents to create our own updated *Essential Elements for Montessori in the Public Sector*, with an emphasis on public. This tool refined and expanded the essentials to 28 elements, keeping language about specialty programs, the “teacher pipeline”, and trained leaders, and adding elements about special education, multilingual learners, and school-home partnership, among others.

We also regrouped the original six domains into five, and presented them within larger domains of fidelity and sustainability, two crucial concepts when considering a public school:

- Fidelity:**
- Adults
 - Learning Environment

- Sustainability:**
- Family Engagement
 - Leadership and Organizational Development
 - Assessment

To further support implementation, we extended the Essential Elements into a detailed Essential Elements Rubric schools could use as both a planning and evaluation tool. Each “Essential Element” was articulated into indicators across a gradation of implementation, from “Exemplary” to “Unsatisfactory”. A sample row is shown at left.

Schools used the Rubric for self-assessment and continuous improvement, and as part of a “school audit” with NCMPS.

These two tools—the Essential Elements and the Rubric—have been available to download for free on the NCMPS website since their release. To date, these resources have been downloaded thousands of times.

Essential Elements Review

Since 2015, NCMPS has partnered with 25 public Montessori schools in an “Essential Elements Review” (EER) process. The EER is an intensive, multi-day site-based appraisal of a program’s strengths and opportunities, with NCMPS staff observing in classrooms using the *Developmental Environment Rating Scale (DERS)*, meeting with stakeholders, and reviewing documents, using the Essential Elements Rubric to give the school community a clear picture of where the school stands on Montessori fidelity and sustainability, and what can be done to move forward in continuous improvement.

From this process, we learned a lot about what makes a school strong, equitable, accessible, and sustainable—in other words, what’s essential. This includes:

- a clearly articulated school-wide vision, with outcomes-aligned values and strategies

- ongoing professional development, including Montessori teacher training, and ongoing coaching and pedagogical support
- consistent collaboration and calibration among and between levels
- lesson design and delivery rooted in Montessori
- data-informed practices, built on an assessment system that takes a holistic view of child development

Working side-by-side with schools through the EER process, we developed a deeper understanding of what’s required of public schools, and what is challenging, and a broader conception of who is included when we think about a school community, and how they are represented.

2023: “Essential Elements for Public Montessori”

Over the last two years, we’ve undertaken a top-to-bottom, side-to-side review and revision of the Rubric, through overlapping lenses of equity, clarity and functionality. Among the many changes:

- Fuller recognition of the legal requirements and the social justice concerns around children receiving services, multilingual learners, and their families.
 - Advocacy for Montessori coaches and appropriately prepared school leadership.
 - Examination of how classroom assistants are described and included in schools.
 - Pragmatic and productive guidelines around required assessments.
- As an example, one key revision captures our process and values:

2023: Foundational Commitments

There is also a role for a simpler document that tells public school leaders and policy-makers *what they need to know about Montessori before getting started*. What do I need to know I’m committing to if I want to get Montessori going in my area of influence?

For this audience, we created the *Foundational Commitments for Public Montessori*, a kind of “Ten Commandments” (although we couldn’t get it down to 10). Among them: You must have a commitment to equity. You must have Montessori-trained teachers teaching Montessori, and you must have extended work periods, mixed age classes, materials, and student choice. If you won’t be able to implement these in your school or district, you still have some work to do to prepare the environment. That doesn’t mean it will never happen, and NCMPS, as well as other organizations, can help with that. But these are all the things that are better to know now than later.

What’s Essential?

Does all this leave us no better off than pre-1990, with competing visions of Montessori claiming legitimacy? We don’t think so. We see a suite of tools specifically designed for unique purposes and audiences. As an organization dedicated to serving *public* Montessori for all students, families, and communities, we don’t take a stand on what’s legitimately Montessori. We know appropriate developmental outcomes, and we know Montessori practices, thought-

2015 Rubric	2023 Rubric
All adults, Montessori trained or not, embrace core Montessori principles, respecting the process of human development and supporting children’s independence, freedom, responsibility, and growth.	Adults embody and foster a school-wide culture supporting human flourishing which respects children, offers independence and responsibility, values racial, cultural, and social identity, and works towards fairness free from bias.

These and many other changes have been incorporated into the full 2023 Essential Elements Rubric, and from there into the two-page Essential Elements for Public Montessori.

fully and equitably applied, can drive them. And we know how to help public schools do this work, and how communities and leaders can work together to build and sustain these programs. If that’s not essential, what is?

Download the tools at: public-montessori.org/tools/#elements

At the beginning is a good place to be

Getting started with a classroom full of new children



PAULA LILLARD PRESCHLACK
AND PAULA POLK LILLARD

Public Montessori teachers face many challenges: Training, materials, state and district requirements—the list goes on. One challenge Primary teachers may face is introducing and establishing Montessori in a classroom for the first time, when it's new to everyone.

While neither of us taught in public schools, this situation does arise in the private sector. In her first years of teaching, my now 91-year-old mother, Paula Polk Lillard, had to start a fresh class of 5 year old children who never had Montessori before every September, for seven years. The suggestions that follow come from her experience, a few AMI trainers, my own starts to the school year, and Montessori's own writings. We offer this in the hope that it provides timeless guidance for most situations.

Begin without materials?

If you can, begin by cleaning your

classroom thoroughly and removing all objects so that you can see the bare bones of the shelves, floor space and furniture. Set out any manufactured Montessori materials you might have and make the classroom beautiful and inviting. **But then, before the first day, put Montessori's materials away, out of sight.** Why? Because your students first need to be oriented to the space and to learn what the expectations are; this is a necessary modification. Showing group lessons to the whole class may seem more like traditional Kindergarten, but this is, in fact, how Dr. Montessori recommended starting a new class. She describes this in *Creative Development in the Child* (1939):

The material is not given to the child when the school is started at first. The teacher should study the group of children, and organize some collective actions to call the children little by little to order around her...Little by little, the children begin to work. When the personality...develops to a point where the child begins to fix his attention deeply upon something, the material is taken out and presented to the child. This is when a new school is started.

Orienting: Grace and Courtesy

To establish the expectations in your classroom, start with Grace and Courtesy Lessons, which foster self-mastery, respect for others and for the environment, and awareness. If it's

possible to have an orientation day, invite just half the group into your room for an hour or so, and then the second half. (You may be able to create smaller groups if another adult can take a group out of the room to another activity). It's ideal if you can start with smaller groups and a shorter school day, and then blend the whole class together for the full morning on the second day.

As each child arrives at the door, greet them with a smile and a handshake or some other chosen custom. Your school may have a tradition, or you may want to learn from parents what they prefer. Begin the custom that you intend to continue, as this is the first impression. Invite the children to join you in a group on the floor and begin an orienting game such as: *I Spy* (to orient to the classroom physically), *Say Your Name* (name songs and games), a movement game, or Grace and Courtesy lessons such as “how to carry a chair”, “how to pass one another without bumping”, “how to carry a tray”, “how to open and close the room door”, or “how to walk across the floor without making a sound”. Choose just a couple so that the children are not sitting for long.

The children may be quiet and more observant at first, or they might be restless and lose focus quickly! They simply may not have the capacity to concentrate for more than a few minutes. Be ready with age-appropriate games, songs, and activities up your sleeve to pull out in the moment, as you see necessary. This keeps the children connected to you. Respond to what you see—this is how you meet the children where they are.

Establishing the work cycle

After a game, a song, and a Grace and Courtesy lesson or two, introduce the concept of a work cycle where they work on their own in the classroom. Eventually this will be two to three hours long, but in the first few days it may be as short as 10 or 15 minutes at a time. Observe and ask the children to put their work away to gather again when you notice them becoming restless. When children have never been in a Montessori classroom before, working on their own with concentration may be novel, so you may need to build up gradually. Respond to what you observe!

On the first days, we suggest providing objects that are more familiar to the children and with which there are no expectations other than the most basic ones: essentially, that we handle things

Grace and Courtesy lessons

In the first Grace and Courtesy Lessons, demonstrate anything and everything that the children need to know, such as:

- How to move in the room
- How to take something out and replace it to the same place on the shelf
- How to take out a rug or table and place their work on it
- How to resist disturbing a classmate who is working
- How to push in one's chair
- How to clean up a spill
- How to get the adult's attention if they need to
- How to get a refreshment or water if they need it
- Where the bathroom is and when it is available

with care and replace them to their place when finished. You need to establish this idea before you bring out the Montessori materials. You can do this with simple objects and activities that you supply for the children to play/work with during their very first few days of the work cycle, such as drawing, puzzles, and simple manipulative toys.

Think of these objects as “placeholders” for the classroom materials, because you will be replacing them with Montessori materials and prepared trays of Practical Life activities in the days ahead. The children need something at first that they can touch and do independently that may not be in your Montessori albums. The purpose of these objects as “place holders” is to establish the basic routines, expectations, and how the classroom functions. The selected objects and activities you have brought in can be kept in a box that you set out *only* for the work cycle time. This is likely just the first few days of the *first year* with a completely *new* group of children under age seven. What we are suggesting should not be necessary once you have some children who have had some Montessori presentations in their past.

Place a few more choices than there are children in the room, so that there



Activity with meaningful purpose

is always a choice in the box. Children learn that if they want to use a certain object and someone else has it, they have to wait for a turn by you—you're always next to the box. This is how they learn to wait until their classmate is finished with something and has returned it to its original location. During this work cycle time, present a Practical Life activity to one child with several others next to you to watch. This means you are always active, so there is something interesting for a child to watch if they come sit by you. While presenting cheerfully, you demonstrate an industrious, positive tone for the whole community.

Practical Life activities

The very first Practical Life presentations will be how to care for the room. Tell the children that this is their room, and you will show them how to do things in it and how to care for it. As with Grace and Courtesy lessons, create Practical Life presentations that you see are needed, such as Sweeping the Floor, Dusting a Shelf, Watering a Plant, or Scrubbing a Table. Such purposeful actions help children to coordinate their minds and bodies and fix their attention, settling their whole personality. This makes these lessons foundational, and crucial.

Invite one child at a time to come to the object box and choose between two activities you propose for that child. They choose one and take it to a rug (which they by now know how to take out, unroll, re-roll and replace.) Do this

pouring, or window washing—activities that do not require long, detailed one-on-one presentations—so that you can keep the group's attention. But they must have meaningful purpose! These Montessori activities will stay in the room all year with a permanent home on the shelf (unlike the orientation objects.) By the third or fourth day of school, invite each child to choose, “Would you like to choose from the orientation box or a material (the Practical Life activities) that I've shown you, from the shelf?” Most children will gravitate towards the shelves because activities with purpose have more natural appeal to young children. This allows you to phase the box out quickly. Remember, the objects in the box are “placeholders” for the Montessori materials and Practical Life, just to get a new class started.

If you are diligent about bringing in three or four new materials each day in the first weeks and presenting them to different children so that everyone has work choices, the room can be complete within eight weeks. (And the orientation objects will be long gone, all replaced with more meaningful activities that draw in children's attention and focus.) During every day, be sure to also read to the children often, play sound games, count items, review days of the week, and introduce real items from the world, such as live plants and insects. There is so much intellectual exploration to nurture, with children of any age!

Realistically, you may need to present to a few children at once, as we have

Each day, you remove a few activities from the box and place a few more Montessori materials on the shelves

in a timely but calm, deliberate fashion. Children work with their chosen object, uninterrupted, and then return the objects to the object box when they feel finished. They may then choose another activity if they would like. When a child has one of these orientation objects, do not concern yourself with what they do with it as long as they are not disturbing anyone else. Put the box of orientation objects away at the end of the work cycle.

Each day, you remove a few activities from the box and place a few Montessori materials on the shelves. Invite children to come to presentations in small groups to learn how to work with the materials. The first materials might be spooning,

suggested here. But simultaneously, take every opportunity to make individual connections with each child by presenting one-to-one, even if just for a few seconds. As the classroom settles, such opportunities will become the norm.

Measurable signs— Is it working?

Once your Grace and Courtesy lessons and Practical Life activities are well established, look for definite signs of your presentations, such as a child rolling a rug with concentration, carrying a tray carefully with two hands, pushing in a chair, or walking slowly across the room. Give Grace and Courtesy lessons



Hands and how to wash them

every single day, all through the year, to foster these customary ways of moving, interacting, and caring for the environment and each other. Children love to learn these customs. It's important to keep presenting them!

Observe to plan lessons

Jot down notes to record the positive interactions or actions you see during the day, and when you realize another Grace and Courtesy lesson would be helpful. This creates your list for the next day and helps you to stay on top of things. We each used to keep a tiny notepad and pencil with us when teaching, and reviewed the notes every evening. You might also use tools from the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector to aid your observation techniques and measuring progress.

In any Montessori classroom, we can look for respect, concentration and joy, to determine whether we are helping the children constructively. All desirable outcomes of Montessori—such as independence, self-control, focus, and confidence—are noticeable when children concentrate for periods of time. They show respect in their physical mannerisms, and express contentment—even joy—in their actions.

As always, refer to your teaching albums daily, consult your Montessori trainers, and read Maria Montessori's work. Our personal experience has been that going deeper into Montessori, rather than away from it, pays off. Starting a class of children who have never had Montessori previously is one of the biggest challenges one can face. With Grace and Courtesy, Practical Life activities, and establishing the work cycle as your focus, you will be on the right path!

Paula Lillard Preschlack has been a Montessori teacher, a head of school, a writer and a speaker for 28 years. She is the author of The Montessori Potential: How to Foster Independence Respect and Joy in Every Child, Parenting Press 2023.

Paula Polk Lillard has spent over 60 years as a Montessori teacher, head of school and international lecturer, and the author of four books on Montessori, including Montessori in the Classroom (1997 Schocken Books, originally printed as Children Learning, 1980).

Montessori as an innovation model

Continued from page 1

Montessori education without paying private school prices. Nobody needed to sell me on how sound the Montessori method is in developing children and their learning. So I could be a kind of interpreter between the Montessori world and the school district world. And at times they came head-to-head. It was a bit of a struggle, and that's when I came in contact with NCMPS. We worked together to get the school set up, to get materials, to hire trained teachers, and to get training for the other staff and the principal. Sara Suchman, now the Executive Director at NCMPS, was a lead coach in the program.

After a few years I left to become Superintendent at the Salem public schools, which had a more of a dual-language orientation, so Montessori wasn't a priority. Then in 2019 I transitioned to the Harvard Graduate School of Education, working in the Doctor of Education Leadership (Ed.L.D.) program and directing the program's Residency.

After that, Sara reached out to me searching for board members for NCMPS and I said, "This is my opportunity to continue to work around Montessori that I was passionate about!" I also bring the ability to speak the language of school districts, and I help the organization understand what it takes to start a school in a district. How do we talk about Montessori to school districts in a way that is actually doable and it's actually understood?

Then, as you know, equity and access are near and dear to my heart, so helping children, especially in districts like Boston or Salem that have many children from underserved backgrounds, get access to Montessori is very important. Children that look like my son, or that speak like me with an accent, or that just can't afford private school—those children also deserve access.

So that's my trajectory, and I've come full circle with NCMPS. I started out as a client of a very young organization, so to come back as a board member and to see all the fantastic work that the team has put together, especially the work around the standards and the alignment work, it's really impressive.

MP: Can you say a little more about what you saw in your nephew's class and later—what made you fall in love with Montessori?

MR: I got interested with my nephew, but as Area Superintendent I was actually observing in classrooms, not only in East Boston but during school visits with NCMPS.

I think it was the honoring of the child—really meeting the child where they are and letting them direct and really own their learning, with the teacher serving as a guide.

Could we begin to talk about Montessori as a “school model”, that can be more easily understood and implemented?

It's funny because in education we talk about that all the time—teachers as facilitators of learning, and how the “sage on the stage” approach doesn't work. But with Montessori you go into a classroom and you see children actively engaged in learning. There's order, there's peace, there's a focus in the classroom, and you see children engaged in really substantial learning at their own pace and they own it. It's like they're the masters of their own learning and the teacher is there to orchestrate those learning experiences.

For me, those are the founding blocks for adults that grow up being able to think for themselves and be creative. That's the other piece—it's creativity and how children in Montessori are encouraged to use their creativity as opposed to in other educational settings where—”No, no! We're going to do it this way, it's not what you're thinking, we're going to learn this way!” That really got to me. That, and the fact that the students were actually learning.

Sometimes you really need to get to know a Montessori classroom well in order to actually see the learning. You could be entering for the first time and see the engagement right away. But I've had the opportunity to spend time in classrooms and to see not only the learning but how children learn to take responsibility for themselves and for their

environment, and how they treat each other.

With the traditional pedagogy you say, “OK, children, this is what we're going to learn, and this is how we're going to learn it, and you're going to do this and that.” But with Montessori that learning happens, but it's with a structure that allows for creativity, allows for the student to learn at their own pace, and it allows for the teacher to provide spontaneous opportunities that then maybe one student or group of students can experience together.

To me that pedagogy is fantastic, and it

builds the students' self-esteem, it builds their confidence, it builds their ability to think for themselves. Unfortunately in many traditional learning environments students are not often asked to think for themselves.

MP: Is that an outcome districts care about? What would you say is so great about that outcome?

MR: I would say, the Montessori method is an incubator for innovative thinking. This is why you see so many people that have had a Montessori education be so successful—Jeff Bezos, the Google founders, Taylor Swift, P. Diddy! And not only successful, but they have created things because of their experiences early on when their brains were developing.

Montessori provides the structure, the experiences, that allows kids to be creative, and to me, this is the seed of innovation. You're given the freedom to learn at your pace, you know you are self-directed and you're learning, and that is the foundation for creativity and later on for innovation.

And in education, we need innovation more than ever. You know, education is a little stagnant right now—we're still teaching kids in many schools like we did back in the 19th century. It's an outdated system that is no longer

reaching our kids and we're wondering why our kids are not learning. So even though Montessori is not a new method, it can bring the tools and approaches that are going to get us more innovation 20 years from now.

And the kids that we graduate from these schools—we need to have kids from underserved communities, kids of color, kids that speak other languages, people that come with different backgrounds, people that don't come from privileged backgrounds. Those kids need to be included in this group so that we can have innovations happening for everyone.

MP: So how do we get this across to the districts?

MR: That's what I want to do at NCMPS—facilitate a deeper understanding of the challenges and what it takes. Right away there are issues that have to do with enrollment, with unions, with classroom sizes, with materials—we need to be very aware, transparent, and forward with these challenges so we can develop strategies, tools, and approaches to address them. How do we bridge these gaps in a way that school districts can understand? What are the challenges and do we as an organization have a full grasp of what those challenges are? Knowing what those challenges are will help us enable a school district to overcome them.

I can provide some context as an insider to add more to that so that NCMPS is in a better position to talk to school districts and help them understand.

You have to remember, when you're talking to a school district you're talking to more than one stakeholder. You're talking to the central office, to the leadership, to teachers, to parents and to students, and the interplay of those stakeholders—and the school board! So there are layers of complexity.

One thing school districts understand well is the language of a school model.

MP: What do you mean by that?

MR: You have dual language schools, and Expeditionary Learning, and STEM or STEAM models and so many more. Could we begin to talk about Montessori as a school model, that can be more

easily understood and implemented? Something that comes as a package, that makes sense next to those other models, that highlights the innovation and creativity but also tells the district exactly how they're going to implement it. I'm excited that NCMPS is doing exactly this work.

MP: Where does the research fit in here?

MR: Well I think it's part of the story. You know, I'm a practitioner—I talk about what I see and what I experience in the field. I know that there's great research about Montessori and that needs to be part of the narrative and it can be part of the toolkit. But a Superintendent, for example, who has the opportunity to open a new school in their district and they want something innovative, they want something different—they do want something that is going to provide students with all these great things. But they need a toolkit on how to go about this. They know the research is great—the question is, how do I implement this with all of these limitations?

MP: So there are other things we should be talking about?

MR: The research is important but in districts people are practitioners. Talk about what it looks like in the classroom. Talk to me about what exactly this pedagogy is and how kids get to the outcomes. Find out what the district's biggest challenges are and explain how Montessori can overcome them. What are their hopes and dreams, what are they struggling with? I tell my graduate students all the time, you have to get granular. So find out their problems, tell them how Montessori will help, and tell them exactly how you're going to do it so they feel like they can really make it happen with all their real-world challenges.

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

Margarita Ruiz is the Residency Director at Harvard University Graduate School of Education and a member of the NCMPS Board of Directors.

Leadership training... Montessori style

CGMS offers school leadership training that is life-style friendly so you can achieve your dreams without sacrificing work, family, or friends. Come experience the best blend of online and low residency learning!

www.cgms.edu/lead
info@cgms.edu
1-888-344-7897



NATIONAL CENTER for MONTESSORI in the PUBLIC SECTOR

THE 2ND ANNUAL
PUBLIC MONTESSORI
CONFERENCE + RETREAT
2024 EQUITY • ACCESS • SUSTAINABILITY

APRIL 12-14, 2024

**Bringing together
people doing the work.**

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:



Desmond Blackburn
CEO of Facing History
and Ourselves



Brook LaFloe
CEO and Co-Founder of
Niniijaanis One of Ones

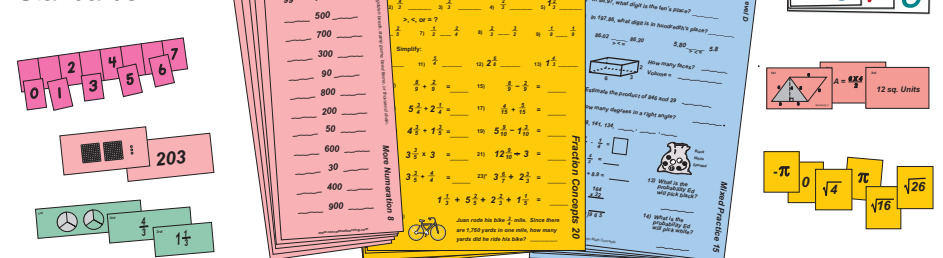
Join NCMPS at the National Conference Center in Leesburg, VA.

Learn More at bit.ly/2024PMConference



Bridges concrete and abstract
Conceptual Learning Materials
Cardstock, reproducible masters, & digital downloads

Addresses State
Standards



www.conceptuallearning.com

866-618-9421

eCatalog : MontessoriServices.com/flip

FALL in Love with our Collection!

Encourage Independence
with **REAL TOOLS** for Hands-On
Gardening, Food Preparation & More!

Montessori Services

Your Resource for Preparing the Child's Environment since 1976

MontessoriServices.com 800-214-8959



Ideal Learning for children of color

Continued from page 1

- diverse experiences to make meaning of the world
- Play is an essential element of young children’s learning
 - Instruction is personalized to acknowledge each child’s development and abilities
 - The teacher is a guide, nurturing presence, and co-structor of knowledge
 - Young children and adults learn through relationships
 - The environment is intentionally designed to facilitate children’s exploration, independence, and interaction
 - The time of childhood is valued
 - Continuous learning environments support adult development
 - In this study, we examined the quality of experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse learners in Ideal Learning settings using two innovative observation tools.

Our approach

To answer these questions, we recruited publicly funded Montessori, HighScope, and Reggio Emilia-inspired early childhood programs who allowed us to observe in their classrooms. During the 2022-23 school year, we visited 34 classrooms in six different schools scattered across the Midwest, the South, and the Mid-Atlantic. We used two different tools to collect data during our classroom observations. The Developmental Environment Rating Scale (DERS), developed by the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector (NCMPS), is an assessment of classroom quality based on five developmental outcomes:

- Initiation and concentration
 - Inhibitory control
 - Working memory
 - Linguistic and cultural fluency
 - Social fluency and emotional flexibility
- } **Executive Functions**

The DERS contains 60 items pertaining to child behaviors, adult behaviors, and the physical environment. Trained observers score these items using an iPad app during a 45- to 60-minute classroom observation.

The Assessing Classroom Sociocultural Equity Scale (ACSES) measures teachers’ culturally responsive practices and equitable learning opportunities. It assesses the extent to which

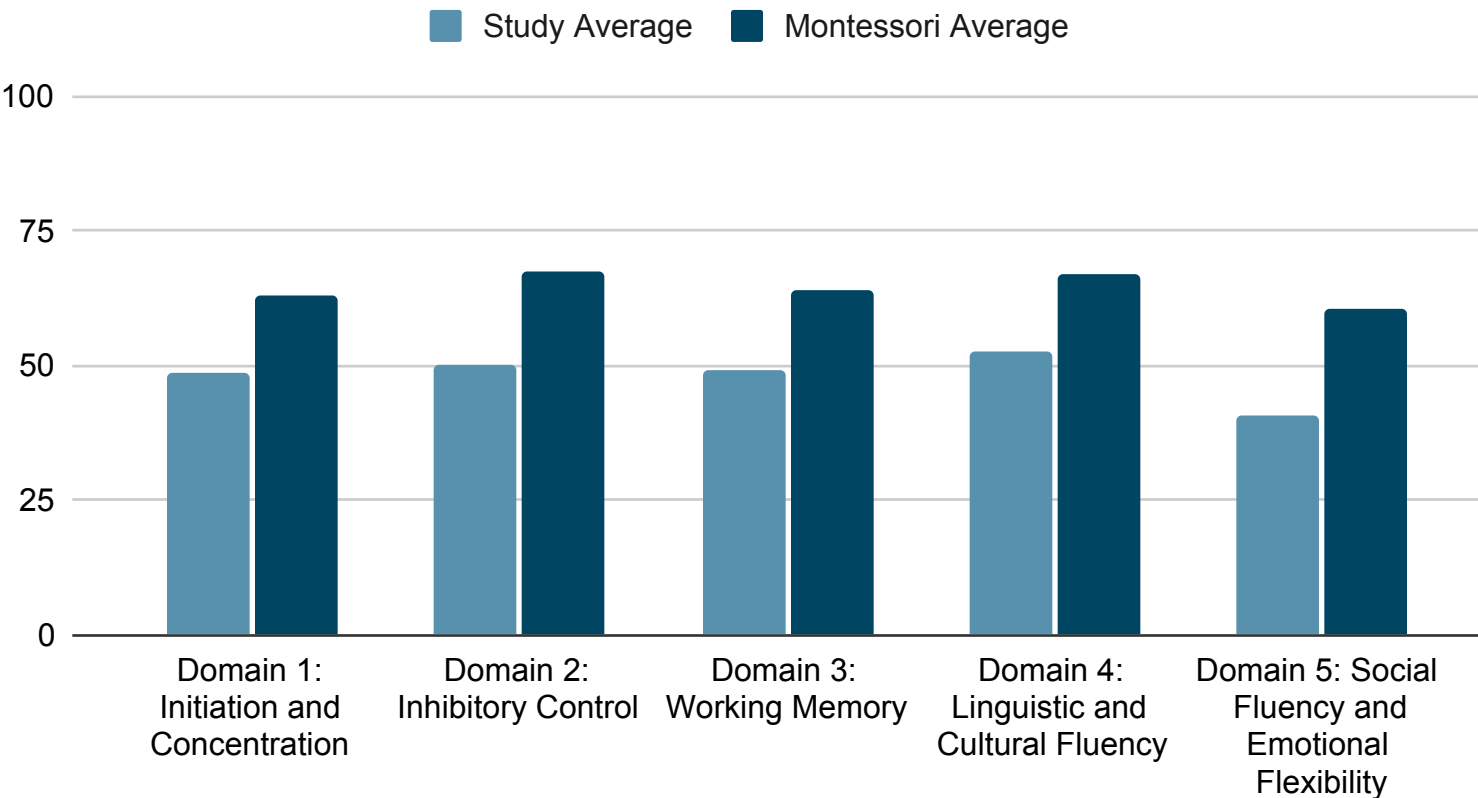
process quality (such as emotional and instructional climate) with a racial equity focus to measure classroom quality, making racial equity and sociocultural diversity central to the conceptualiza-

tion of quality. Specifically, based on 40 indicators, ACSES measures the quality of the conversation within the classroom (e.g., classroom discourse), peer relationships, discipline, emotional connections between teachers and peers, and how effectively critical thinking is fostered through questions (e.g., analyzing and brainstorming questions) and dialogue with all racially marginalized learners (RMLs). RMLs are defined as children in the classroom who come from culturally, racially, and ethnically minoritized groups who have been denied or restricted access to quality education.

for Inhibitory Control and Linguistic and Cultural Fluency, while the lowest scores were in Social Fluency and Emotional Flexibility.

Generally speaking, undesirable

DERS Domain Scores



teachers are affirming children of color’s engagement in the classroom and their use of equitable and positive discipline practices across five dimensions:

- Challenging Status Quo Knowledge
- Equitable Learning Opportunities
- Equitable Discipline
- Connections to Home Life
- Personalized Learning Opportunities

child behaviors were, on average, less prevalent than desirable child behaviors. Children exhibited high levels of engagement, care, and joy. Conversation was prevalent in the classrooms we observed, and children exhibited behaviors requiring executive functions, such as shifting and waiting their turn, fairly often. Children were rarely observed disrupting or misusing materials, and were generally able to engage in work without seeking adult approval or permission.

What we learned

Likewise, desirable adult behaviors were more prevalent than undesirable ones, though some negatively scored adult behaviors, such as calling across the room and praising to flatter, were not uncommon. The classroom environments exhibited many favorable characteristics. They were generally clean, outfitted with equipment made from natural materials, and ready for children to enter and work. Children had rich opportunities to develop language and their senses. Mixed-age groupings of two to three years were common, but not universal.

ACSES also yields scores across five domains. For each domain, classrooms are classified as Low, Moderate, and High. A score of less than 2 is classified as low, while 2-3 is moderate and 4-5 is high. On average, the classrooms in this study scored low on Challenging Status Quo Knowledge (CSQK) and Connections to Home Life (CHL). These

program scores are observably higher in the ELO and ED dimensions compared to traditional early childhood programs, such as Pre-K and Head Start.

This study represented the first time that these two instruments were used together, and so presented a unique opportunity to understand how the constructs they measure might be related.

associations would generally be classified as medium.

This suggests that classrooms with higher levels of equitable discipline practices are more likely to also be classrooms that effectively support executive functions, literacy, and social-emotional development. While this correlation does not indicate whether this rela-

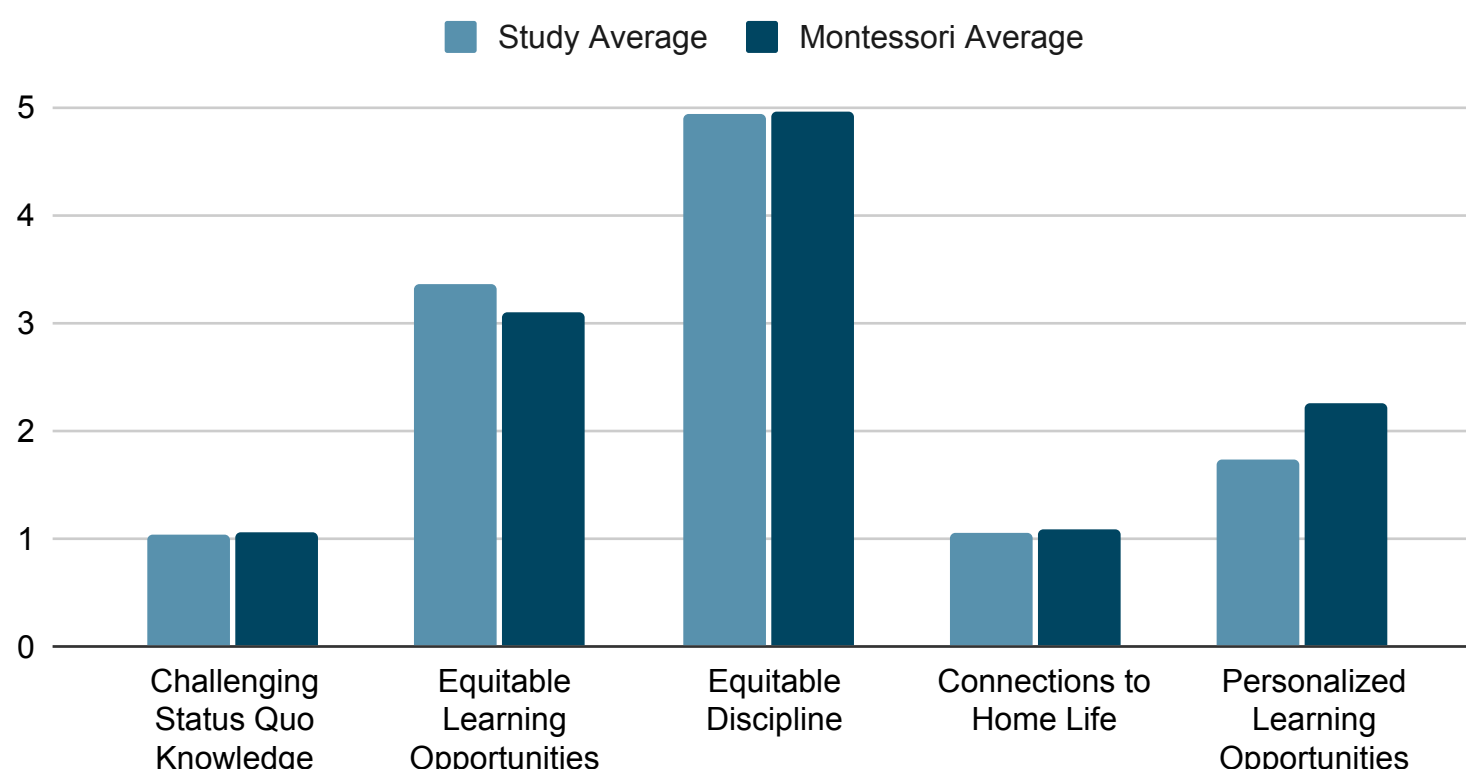
be acknowledged, including the small sample size and the convenient sample. Future studies should have a larger sample of Ideal Learning programs as well as randomly selected classrooms. Nonetheless, this study is the first of its kind to provide new data on how Ideal Learning programs like Montessori and Reggio Emilia-inspired are serving children of color.

These two measures indicate that children of color in Ideal Learning classrooms are likely to be in moderate quality programs that support equitable learning opportunities and engage in equitable discipline while promoting concentration, emotional flexibility, and inhibitory control. Unfortunately, the data also shows that more work is needed in these programs to ensure that children of color, whose educational opportunities have historically been of poor quality, are in early settings that connect children's learning to their home life and challenge status quo knowledge to ensure the history and excellence of people of color are centered in the programs.

Katie Brown is the Director of Research for the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector.

Iheoma Iruka is founding director of the Equity Research Action Coalition at Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute and research professor in the Department of Public Policy at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

ACSES Dimension Scores



classrooms earned a moderate score in the dimensions of Personalized Learning Opportunities (PLO) and Equitable Learning Opportunities (ELO). On average, these classrooms scored high on Equitable Discipline (ED). ACSES scores were similar across HighScope, Reggio Emilia-inspired, and Montessori classrooms. However, these Ideal Learning

To do this, we correlated the DERS domain scores with the ACSES dimension scores for all 34 participating classrooms. Though our sample size is small, we do see some evidence of correlation in our dataset. Specifically, the Equitable Discipline dimension from the ACSES was significantly correlated with all five DERS domains. The strength of these

tionship is causal, it does suggest that these classroom characteristics tend to go together. This finding is important in light of many reports showing that Black children and other minoritized children are more likely to experience exclusionary practices, such as suspension and expulsion, compared to White children.

The limitations of this study must



**Houston
Montessori
Center**

CELEBRATING
50
YEARS

**A blended model of in-person
and online course training.**

- Infant & Toddler
- Early Childhood
- Elementary I
- Elementary II
- Elementary I-II
- Secondary I-II
- Administrators

Betsy Coe, Ph.D., Executive Director
7807 Long Point Road Suite 100 | Houston, Texas 77055
PHONE: 713-465-7670 | FAX: 713-465-8577
www.houstonmontessoricenter.org
AMS Affiliated. Accredited by MACTE.

AMS Affiliated
MACTE Accredited
Approved by Maryland
Higher Ed. Commission

**Quality teacher
education since 1980**

barrie.org

13500 Layhill Road,
Silver Spring, MD 20906

BarrieInstitute
FOR ADVANCED MONTESSORI STUDIES

- Certification programs & graduate credits available
 - Infant & Toddler (ages birth-3)
 - Early Childhood (ages 2.5-6)
 - Elementary I & II (ages 6-9, 6-12)
 - Administrator Course
- Dedicated and experience faculty
- Beautiful 45-acre campus on which to learn and explore
- Internship opportunities available at Barrie Montesso



Contact us today! 301.576.2866 | iams@barrie.org

Residency: A new model for training

The MTR is designed with public school teachers in mind



LAURE FLEMING

Since 2019, NCMPS has been delivering MACTE-accredited Montessori teacher education using a new model—the Montessori Teacher Residency (MTR).

We are not alone in this new work. Other MTR programs include the Chicago Montessori Residency at the Montessori School of Englewood, the Arete Montessori Teacher Residency located at the Libertas School of Memphis, and the University of Delaware Montessori Teacher Residency based in UD's Professional and Continuing Studies. Faculty and program directors from all of these MACTE-accredited programs as well as from new MTRs seeking MACTE accreditation convene monthly to share learnings, develop resources and to strengthen our approach, in a collaborative effort called the Public Montessori Residency Consortium (PMRC).

PMRC programs are different

In order to support schools' ability to hire teachers who represent their community, these programs enroll cohorts of Residents from geographically connected public schools or school districts. They establish close partnerships with those institutions, working alongside school leaders and coaches to train and support new Montessori teachers prepared to serve in the public sector.

Residents complete a MACTE-accredited Montessori teacher education program while employed full-time in instructional roles in MTR partner institutions. During their residency period, Residents engage in job-embedded coaching, facilitated NCMPS Lesson Study and Child Study sessions, and instruction in complementary coursework addressing topics such as diversity, equity and inclusion; trauma informed education; working with multilingual learners; effective family engagement; and advanced seminars on language and literacy. This set of topics arose out of NCMPS research and field experience

which helped us identify what public school teachers most needed to bridge their work from the Montessori canon and pedagogy to the children and families they serve in the public sector. These courses (the "Montessori Surround") are available outside of the PMRC as graduate courses through Whitworth University.

NCMPS MTRs in action

So far, NCMPS has completed six MTR cohorts at three levels: Early Childhood, Elementary I, and Elementary I-II, in four states, and we have four more cohorts enrolled. Our Montessori albums and video libraries are in use by our own cohorts as well as in three other MTR programs. NCMPS MTR partner schools include district, charter, and non-profit organizations who offer no-cost Montessori education. These partners make it possible for thousands of children to have access to Montessori classrooms regardless of income. Our partner schools serve children in urban, suburban, and rural communities. We have worked with three dual-language programs who provide Montessori education in English and Spanish. This work was made possible by the generous support of Instituto Nueva Escuela (INE), a Montessori teacher education program working with public schools across Puerto Rico, who provided NCMPS with access to the Montessori albums in Spanish which our dual language teachers so desperately need.

Having now worked on MTRs with a variety of schools across seven states and the District of Columbia, we have



Residents doing the big work of teacher preparation

ers who will be successful in serving their particular students.

Most MTRs offer differentiated pacing of content and customize training schedules to allow for ease of access for each cohort. We make schedules that take advantage of pre-determined

what children in a particular location will encounter in standardized testing. For children to feel empowered and confident, they also need to feel competent and capable in facing what is expected of them. We do all this without compromising the core tenets of Montessori pedagogy and the transformation of the adult.

MTR Residents do best when they encounter experienced public school Montessori teachers, instructors, and coaches who believe in the children and trust the pedagogy. New teachers have a lot of doubts about how they can be true to what they are learning in Montessori training and still meet the requirements and expectations of public school systems. They need to be surrounded by others who strongly believe in and will advocate for fully implemented Montessori. In order to ensure that Residents have the job-embedded support they need, MTR partner schools take advantage of NCMPS trainings for school leaders, coaches, student-support coordinators, and others. A school that

Montessori immersion includes welcoming and modeling the sharing of divergent points of view

learned some things about supporting new public Montessori teachers through their training programs.

Local context matters

The culture of the school and the community have a powerful influence on the experience of Residents. Collaboration with school leaders is vital to ensure that we are helping build a pipeline of teach-

PD days so that training requires less out-of-school time away from families. Depending on the region of the country, we may need to adjust album content or develop different sample presentations so that Residents will be prepared to offer relevant and compelling presentations to children. This is particularly important for geography, history, life science, and ecology, but also considers

exemplifies a “habitat of transformation” where everyone is growing and learning together provides a strong context in which new teachers can integrate their training and implement it well.

Many MTRs serve Residents who are part of a cohort in a start-up or conversion school rather than a well-established program. In these situations, we need to be realistic that both the school and the Residents are undergoing a journey. We should expect that their classrooms will take longer to “look Montessori” as materials are ordered, furniture is built, and families, children, and staff acclimate to an entirely new environment. We set interim goals and celebrate small successes recognizing the challenge it is to open a school and take Montessori training at the same time. And, especially if there are no other established Montessori classrooms in the school to observe, the training room needs to offer Residents a window into the full experience.

Montessori “immersion” experiences matter

Residents who were not themselves Montessori children have likely never experienced a learner-centered environment from the perspective of a learner. As part of our program, we try to give adult learners immersion experiences in environments prepared just for them.



Montessori immersion

As many TEPs do, we sometimes ask adult learners to practice with Montessori materials as if they were a child. This means choosing an activity, finding a workspace, gathering materials, and working through something until they feel affinity or understanding. In the pacing of our instructional programs and in the tenor of our com-

munication, we as instructors need to be able to adjust in order to follow the Residents as we would have them follow the children.

Montessori immersion can mean setting a classroom chores rotation and a shared snack schedule so that our teaching environments are lovingly cared for and nourishing. It can mean that small groups collaboratively read and discuss Montessori theory, make posters, and give oral presentations to the rest of the group. We hold circle times, play games, sing songs, and perhaps start the day with a morning message to journal about. Residents might construct nets and build mobiles of polyhedra using art supplies and their own imaginations. Residents sometimes do the “big work” of the children, such as collaborating on ancient history research projects that culminate with class events including music, dance, and food. It could be that we need to invite Residents to continue working on coloring or painting cell models they’ve made while the TEP instructor begins modeling the next set of presentations, because the Residents are not yet ready to move away from that work but the clock is ticking for the day.

How Residents feel and how instructors live the pedagogy work together to shape Residents’ emerging understanding of Montessori. Montessori immersion includes welcoming and modeling the sharing of divergent points of view, leaning into addressing conflict, taking turns, managing limited resources, and also cultivating joy. Many Residents entering MTR programs may have many years of deep experience in more conventional schools and educational settings. How they experience their Montessori training programs shapes the way they will frame out and implement Montessori in their own classrooms. It’s not infrequent to have other school staff stop by an MTR training space, take note of what is happening, and say, “this looks a lot more fun than my training was.” That fun is by design.

Flexibility matters

NCMPs works to support each public Montessori school on its own particular journey, and that practice transfers to work with MTR schools. As we collaborate with school partners over the multi-year cycle, we are always considering two questions: “What do the residents need?” and “What can the residents handle?” The answers to these questions change depending on many factors. We have to remain informed regarding school system mandates, state legislation, non-teaching respon-



Job-embedded training

sibilities, and all kinds of community occurrences or news that will impact Residents’ capacities and sometimes even their motivation at different points in the training cycle. We look for ways to streamline their work, in some cases designing whole-school PD experiences or resident assignments that can simultaneously address a requirement of both their employers and the TEP. We are able to work together well because school coaches and instructional leaders who meet MACTE requirements for TEP instructors are automatically co-opted as part of the MTR faculty serving the cohort of learners. This allows us to be flexible and strategic—neither over- or under-training the group in a particular topic or area.

In a world that offers up many challenges and obstacles, people require flexibility on an individual level as well. With the clear goal of preparing Residents to serve as teachers in these diverse school communities, it is necessary to be responsive to the human beings before us. While they are all selected by their individual schools for participation in the program, cohort members enter into the MTR with diverse experiences, cultures, languages, strengths, needs, and even goals.

There are many program requirements which cannot be changed or negotiated for individual Residents, but within those structures, we try to offer flexibility that affirms and supports each individual Resident in doing their best work. That can mean that Residents are invited to provide written responses in

a language other than English. It may mean that self-made videos, phone conversations, or voice recordings can suffice to demonstrate understanding of a topic when requiring a written response places a barrier to completion. In most cases, the timing of due dates can be adjusted to accommodate human needs and extenuating circumstances. And because we have school staff serving as faculty on the program and participating in MTR faculty workshops, when Residents do need to miss aspects of the program for unforeseen reasons, they can receive school-based make-up sessions over the course of the academic year and do not lose their place in the program. This does require a lot of record-keeping on the part of the TEP and the part of the Resident, however it is totally worth the effort. School leaders recognize the individual gifts and promise in the teachers they select for MTR programs, and the MTR program in turn commits to try and help each one earn their credential and become a Montessori guide.

[Ed note: Looking ahead—In the spring issue of MontessoriPublic, we will explore the MTR approach to culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy.]

Laure Fleming is the Director of Montessori Teacher Residencies as the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector.

Research backs the Montessori 3-year cycle

Data analysis shows measurable growth in the third year



SONYA HEMMEN, RYAN MARKS, AND KATIE BROWN

In 2018, NCMPS analyzed assessment data from 43 public and private Montessori schools using Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), an assessment tool developed by the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA). This analysis found that students in Montessori schools performed better on MAP in reading and math, and that student growth accelerated as students neared the end of upper elementary (sixth grade). In this article, we relate how Ross Montessori, a charter school in Colorado, collaborated with their authorizer to use MAP data to show how its students benefited from the full three-year cycle called for by the Montessori approach.

MAP at Ross

In 2005, when Ross Montessori School received approval for its first charter contract from the Charter School Institute, founding staff and board members chose MAP as its interim assessment program for math, reading, language, and science. It has remained a durable and dependable interim assessment since then and provides the school’s educational team with individualized data that helps them to

personalize instruction for their students.

MAP is used across many educational approaches in conventional public, charter, and independent schools, and the information provided guides educators to customize the learning lessons for students as individuals, in small and large groups. The tool provides teachers with detailed information about what students can do in K–12 math, reading, language usage, and science, along with accurate, actionable evidence to help inform instructional strategies regardless of how far students are above or below grade level. It also connects to a large set of instructional content providers, giving educators flexibility in curriculum choices.

One day, Head of School Sonya Hemmen was approached by a parent of a fourth grade student. This parent loved the school and the Montessori model, but was struggling to interpret and understand their student’s interim assessment data, which showed the student at or below the national norm. Hemmen was able to articulate how the three-year cycle would result in a student who, at the end of sixth grade, would be able to demonstrate increased growth and achievement, and how in the meantime, it was perfectly normal to see achievement and growth that was below norms. The school had fielded similar questions over the years, and was interested in broadening its response to this question to not only include an explanation of the Montessori model, but also include empirical evidence showing the impact that the three-year cycle has on student achievement and growth using the schools interim assessment data. So, Hemmen approached her school’s au-

thorizer, the Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI), for help with providing some more empirical evidence to their families about student learning trajectories under the Montessori model.

A collaborative approach to accountability

CSI is a statewide charter public school authorizer committed to creating and sustaining a portfolio of high-quality school options that meet the needs of all students. CSI authorizes over 40 schools across Colorado, from Towaoc to Steamboat Springs and Grand Junction to Colorado Springs, serving over 22,000 PK-12 students. These schools offer over sixteen unique educational models—

system and practices to identify different yet still rigorous ways of evaluating school quality and support continuous improvement. While there is a strong and comprehensive accountability system at CSI, it is essential to innovate and make sure that there is consistent and meaningful accountability for all schools as they implement their educational models. This query from Hemmen provided an opportunity to explore new approaches to evaluating school quality.

Methods

Achievement and growth MAP data in English Language Arts and Math was collected for all students for the past five years. Achievement is a measure of what

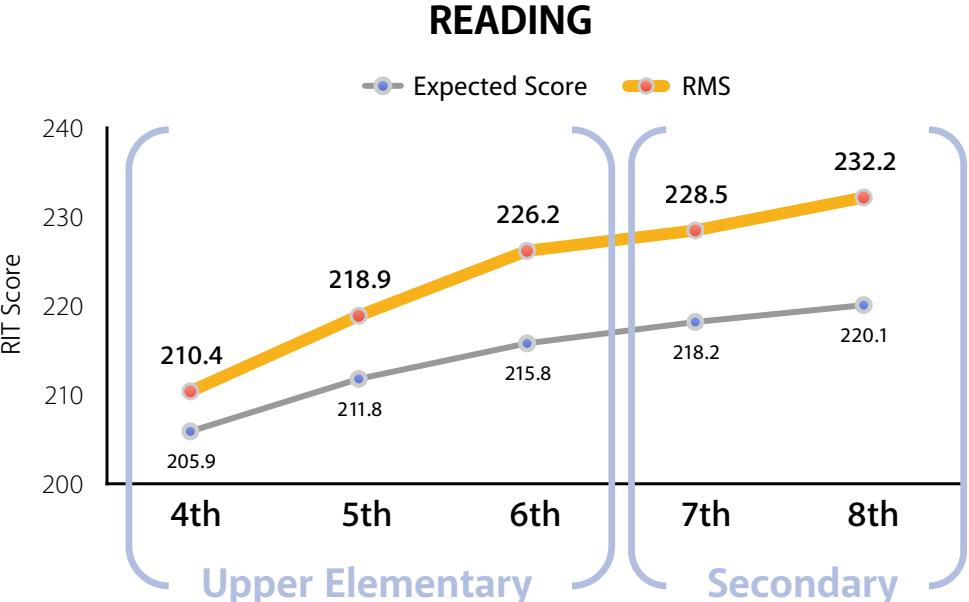
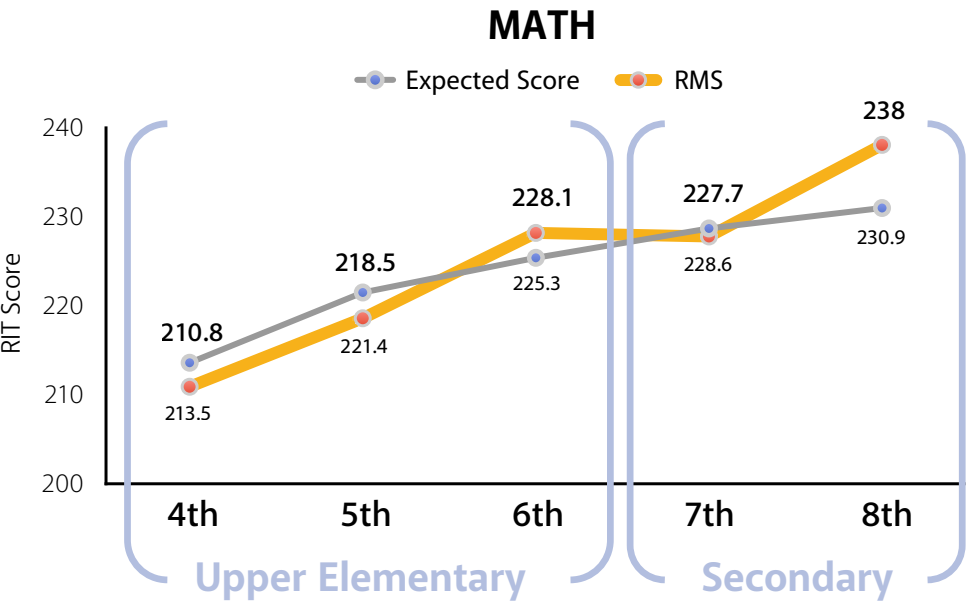
Could empirical evidence show the impact that of the three-year cycle on student achievement and growth?

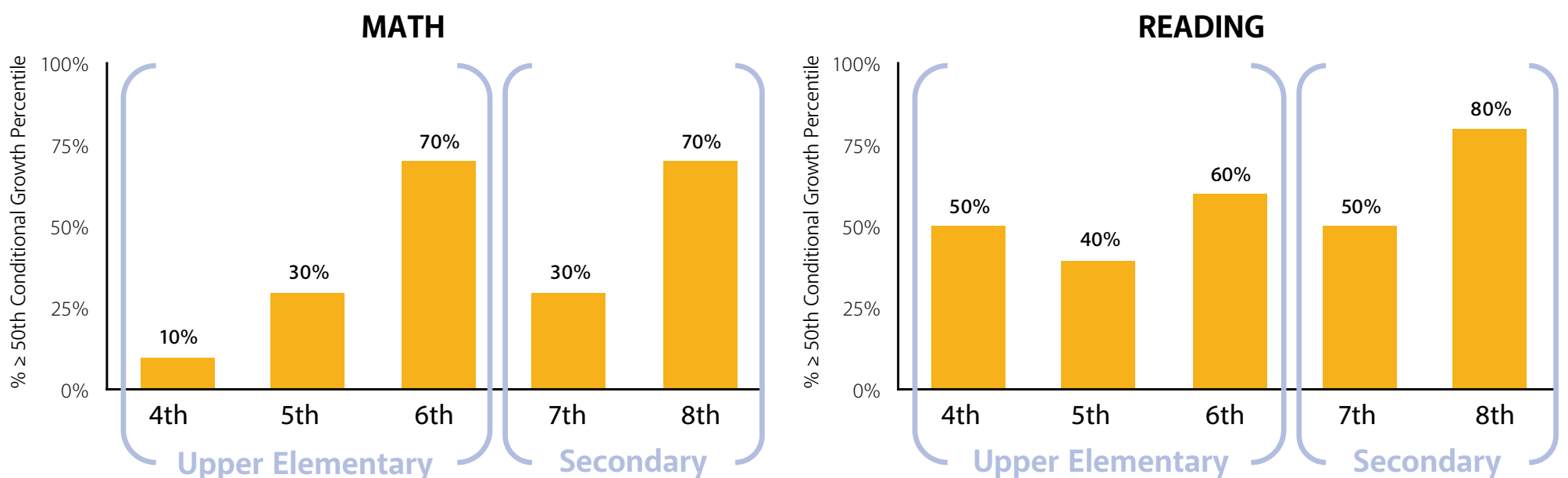
including Early College, Alternative Education Campus, Waldorf, Classical, and Montessori—to best meet the needs of their communities.

As an authorizer, CSI offers support, flexibility, and transparent accountability to ensure its schools are in the best position possible to serve their students. CSI’s focus on outcomes rather than processes allows the institute to be neutral on educational model and maintain a diverse portfolio of school models.

In order to sustain the diversity of the existing portfolio and encourage new and innovative charter school models, CSI has undertaken a multi-year effort to update and evolve its accountability

a student knows and growth measures student progress from one test to another. This study used the NWEA RIT scale to measure achievement and the conditional growth percentile to measure student progress against their individualized growth goals. Five-year cohorts were created for groups of students who had been enrolled at the school continuously over those five years and had interim assessment results in the spring for all years examined. In the end, three cohorts were created and evaluated (6th, 7th, and 8th grade cohorts). For this article, we will highlight the 8th grade cohort.





Results—Achievement

First, using the five-year cohort, we looked to see if the three-year cycle was visible in student achievement scores. During the upper elementary three-year cycle, the cohort began below the norm in math in 4th grade, but exceeded the norm at the end of the cycle. The cohort saw an increase of 7.7 points from 4th to 5th grade (compared to the expected 7.9 points). However, from 5th to 6th grade, the cohort saw an increase of 9.6 points (compared to the expected 3.9 points) and exceeded the norm in 6th grade.

During the secondary years, the cohort began at the norm in math and again exceeded the norm at the end of the cycle. The cohort maintained the score

cohort saw a 2.3 point change during the transition from upper elementary to Secondary that was similar to the expected change (2.4 point expected change), and an increase of 3.7 points from 7th to 8th grade (compared to the expected 1.9 points).

Results—Growth

Using the five-year cohort, we looked to see if the three-year cycle was visible in student growth scores. In math, during the upper elementary three-year cycle, the percentage of students exceeding their conditional growth percentile increased each year from 10% in 4th grade at the start of the cycle to 70% in 6th grade at the end of the cycle. During

ary, the percentage of students exceeding their conditional growth percentile dropped from 60% in 6th grade to 50% in 7th grade. However, during the 8th grade year, 80% of students in the cohort were again exceeding their conditional growth percentile.

Additional cohort groups (7th grade and 6th grade) were included in the analysis and while the patterns in the additional cohorts are not as visible as the 8th grade cohort, there is an indication that the three-year cycle has an influence on achievement and growth patterns for all three cohort groups.

Implications

These data demonstrate that Montessori instruction is effective, with the biggest payoff coming at the end of each level. Montessori is traditionally offered in a three-year cycle starting with the youngest learners. In the case of Ross Montessori, levels are K, grades 1-3, grades 4-6, and grades 7-8. Parents had been observing that their child's achievement may have been high, but that their achievement did not seem to keep up at the same pace. As the three-year cycle unfolds, the longitudinal data from students shows that comparatively, students perform less well in the first year of the cycle, improve in year two and demonstrate significant growth in the final year of any level of instruction. Ross uses the data collected from MAP and shares it with parents to illustrate that when students remain at Ross for all levels of Montessori instruction, their learning and achievement places them solidly in a strong place for high school and beyond.

Though the adolescent program is not a complete three-year cycle, serving only grades 7 and 8, MAP test results follow the same pattern: achievement and growth are both higher in eighth

grade than in seventh. Hemmen commented that students who have completed middle school are successful at local high schools and continue on into public and private colleges and universities, as well as into trades positions. She adds that, "The Montessori Method follows the child as Dr. Montessori advised. Montessori alumni have great track records for following their passions. MAP would capture this if local secondary schools assessed students with it and we are certain that Ross student tests in PSAT show their individual achievement and curricular gains."

Though many students in public Montessori schools leave after fifth grade to matriculate into a traditional middle school, MAP scores from Ross suggest that the sixth grade year is an important year of learning and consolidation. These results are consistent with NCMPS's nationwide analysis five years ago. Additionally, this collaboration between Ross and CSI demonstrates how Montessori charter schools and their authorizers can work together to develop assessment and accountability frameworks that hold Montessori schools accountable for student learning while also upholding the integrity of the Montessori model.

Sonya Hemmen is Head of School at Ross Montessori School in Carbondale, CO.

Ryan Marks is the Chief of Authorizing and Accountability at the Colorado Charter School Institute.

Katie Brown is the Director of Research for the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector.

Montessori instruction is effective, with the biggest payoff coming at the end of each level

during the transition from the Upper Elementary cycle to the Secondary cycle (228.1 in 6th grade to 227.7 in 7th grade) and was at the norm in 7th grade. The cohort then saw an increase of 10.3 points from 7th to 8th grade (compared to the expected 2.3 points).

Similar patterns were observed in reading; however, the cohort always remained above the norm. The cohort saw an increase in the score of 8.5 points from 4th to 5th grade (compared to the expected 5.9 points) and an increase of 7.3 points from 5th to 6th grade (compared to the expected 4.0 points). During the secondary three-year cycle, similar patterns were observed, and the cohort continued to exceed the norm despite a smaller change in score during the transition from 6th to 7th grade. The

the transition from upper elementary to secondary, the percentage of students exceeding their conditional growth percentile dropped from 70% in 6th grade to 30% in 7th grade in math. However, during the 8th grade year, 70% of students in the cohort were again exceeding their conditional growth percentile.

In reading, during the upper elementary three-year cycle, the percentage of students exceeding their conditional growth percentile increased from 50% in 4th grade at the start of the cycle to 60% in 6th grade at the end of the cycle. There was not as clear of a pattern in reading as in math and there was a decrease in the percent of students exceeding their individualized growth goal in 5th grade. During the transition from upper elementary to second-

Montessori Public Advocacy 23–24

QIS integration, licensure in North Carolina, UPK, and more



**VYJU KADAMBI AND
DENISE MONNIER**

As this article goes to press, we're looking back on our annual Montessori Public Policy Advocacy Conference (see sidebar) and reflecting on the achievements of MPPI staff and state advocates over the past year. What follows is just a sampling of the vast amount of work currently underway to provide universal access to Montessori education.

This past January, after nearly two years of conversations and collaboration, MPPI and the BUILD Initiative co-published a paper (*Broadening Policy for Mixed Delivery: Incorporating Montessori Programs in State Quality Improvement Systems*) providing information and suggestions on how states can recognize high quality Montessori programs within their Quality Improvement Systems (QIS), workforce registries, and childcare licensing. The BUILD Initiative helps state leaders create policies, infrastructure, and connections across agencies and organizations to advance comprehensive, high-quality, and equitable programs, services, and supports for young children, their families, and communities. They help leaders think and act systemically to address disparities and expand their networks to enhance their capacity to take action. BUILD engages in all of these supports in order to help build equitable early childhood systems.

MPPI established a relationship with BUILD's Early Care and Education, Quality Improvement Initiatives Director, Deb Mathias, by attending their annual conference, and inviting her to speak at our 2018 conference. We intermittently engaged in conversations about challenges Montessori programs faced with state QIS's, which eventually resulted in the proposal of a co-published paper.

MPPI brought the perspective of challenges that Montessori schools face within these state policies and Montessori inclusive policies that were

already in place. Our BUILD collaborator brought her extensive knowledge of the broader Early Childhood Education community, and a strong sense of what would speak to QIS policy makers. Over the course of several more months, the report came to life. The paper was published and accompanied by a webinar hosted by BUILD and moderated by MPPI, with panelists from three states that MPPI and our state advocates have worked with extensively to establish Montessori friendly QIS policies. The webinar drew nearly 500 registrants representing 46 states and has since been watched by many more. MPPI and our state advocacy leads have engaged in many productive conversations since the release of the paper and webinar.

Our state advocates have also been hard at work. Montessori advocates in North Carolina are deep in the process of advocating for a pathway to state teacher licensure for Montessori credentialed teachers. Advocates from Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools, including parents, school administrators and Montessori Association of North Carolina representatives have been pooling their resources, connections, and talents to attain this goal. The group was inspired by the success in Maryland and the proposed legislation in Michigan. Advocates reviewed the history of previous work on this issue, considered their options, and started reaching out to other parent organizations, advocates, lobbyists, and legislators to find a way to get either a stand-alone bill or get language added as an amendment to an existing bill.

The North Carolina advocates put together a one-page information document about Montessori teacher preparation and positive effects a pathway for those teachers to obtain state teaching licenses would have on North Carolina public Montessori schools. MPPI assisted with editing and suggestions for this document and also provided a system for the group to create a call to action for North Carolina Montessori advocates, schools, parents, and teachers to contact their legislators and provided them template wording for the outreach.

Numerous developments unfolded as a result of the collective endeavors of the group. While an independent bill was introduced, regrettably, it failed to progress beyond its initial stages. On a brighter note, a representative successfully incorporated language recognizing

Highlights from the 2023 MPPI Advocacy Conference

September 30th – October 1st, 2023, in Washington DC

An Inside View: Strategies, Trends, and Equity in State-Level Policy Making with Dr. Lisa Roy, Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Early Childhood
Building on Success: Utilizing MPPI's Triumphs to Drive Policy Change in Your State with MPPI Staff and Corey Borgman

Indigenous Language Reclamation: A Conversation with the Indigenous Montessori Network.

Advocacy Evolution: Empowering Movements for Lasting Change with Syritha Robinson, All Our Kin's Director of Movement Building and Field Level Change

Moving Beyond Montessori Myths, a hands-on community conversation

Table Talks, enriching dialogue with experts and fellow advocates. Choose from teacher licensure, talking with legislators, universal preschool, ECERS and CLASS, public Montessori tools, research and more!

Missed us in DC? We'll be back with another Advocacy Conference in 2024!

credentials into the house budget proposal. Despite numerous outreach efforts directed towards senators, the provisions for Montessori education were absent from the senate budget appropriations bill. This outcome was influenced by the bill's heavy alignment with party-specific agendas, aimed at swift approval. While the budget approval is still pending, we remain optimistic for the inclusion of Montessori-related language. Regardless of its incorporation, the advocacy efforts fostered valuable connections and relationships. These newfound alliances have galvanized the advocates, fueling their determination to propose further legislation in the forthcoming legislative session.

A prominent subject in the realm of early childhood education is Universal Preschool, or UPK. Not too long ago, only a handful of states had truly universal preschool, which entails publicly funded preschool programs accessible to the majority of, if not all, 3 and 4-year-olds. The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) defines a program as achieving universal preschool status when 70 percent of 4-year-olds are enrolled. Notably, during the 2019-2020 academic year, Florida, Oklahoma, Vermont, Wisconsin, and Washington DC fulfilled this criterion.

Numerous other states are in the process of enacting UPK policies. These states include Georgia, New Jersey, Colorado, California, Illinois, Alabama, New York, and Hawaii, with more pos-

sibly on the horizon.

One state moving forward with UPK is Maryland, which also has a legislated pathway to state teacher licensure for Montessori credentialed teachers, as well as childcare licensing accommodations for Maryland validated Montessori schools to have larger group sizes and adult child ratios in order to preserve those high-quality Montessori classroom environments.

Maryland passed a huge education initiative in 2021 which included funding and parameters for universal preschool. The requirements for providers would have made it difficult for both public and private Montessori schools to participate. Montessori advocates from the Montessori Schools of Maryland worked with a legislator and other early childhood organizations to advocate for an amendment allowing Montessori classrooms participating in the UPK program to have larger class sizes and adult child ratios and for individuals with a bachelor's degree and Montessori credential to qualify as lead teachers. The amendment was passed in March of 2023.

Vyju Kadambi is the Advocacy Associate for the Montessori Public Policy Initiative

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

Rigorous meta-analysis says Montessori works

The most thorough and exhaustive report to date



DAVID AYER

In a systematic review of Montessori research, researchers from an internationally recognized research organization found that **Montessori education outperformed traditional education on a wide variety of academic and nonacademic outcomes.**

The search and review process, published in Campbell Systematic Reviews by the Campbell Collaboration*, narrowed the field to examine 32 studies which met stringent inclusion requirements. In so doing, they found high-quality evidence for Montessori's effect on academic and non-academic outcomes

The full report is 74 pages densely packed with text, tables, and references. The "plain language summary," excerpted here with emphasis added, tells the story. Read the full report and the summary at onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/cl2.1330.

* What is Campbell?

The Campbell Collaboration is an "international research network which publishes high quality systematic reviews of social and economic interventions around the world," according to their 2017 Annual Report. They produce Campbell Systematic Reviews on hundreds of topics including education, crime and justice, and international development, to name just a few, which are widely read and cited by government organizations and policy-makers worldwide. This review is yet another marker of how Montessori education is increasingly being seen as an area worthy of serious study for its impact and potential.

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

Plain Language Summary

Montessori education significantly impacts academic and non-academic outcomes

Relative to traditional education, Montessori education has ... **meaningful positive effects** on children's **academic and non-academic (executive function, creativity and social-emotional) outcomes.**

What is this review about?

How best to educate children is an issue of enduring concern, and **Montessori is the most common alternative to the conventional education system.** Montessori includes a full system of lessons and hands-on materials ... presented individually, and embedded in a philosophical framework regarding children's development and its optimal conditions.

The term Montessori is not trademarked, and, therefore, its implementation can vary. We studied the range of variations included in the literature, which likely reflects the range of implementations encountered in the world. We also compared Montessori with a range of control conditions described in the literature as traditional (sometimes referred to as conventional, or business-as-usual), reflecting the implementation of traditional education in the real world.

What is the aim of this review?

This review examined whether children who receive Montessori education have better academic and non-academic outcomes than children who receive traditional education. This review also examined whether certain elements moderate the effects of Montessori education (i.e., grade level, public vs private Montessori settings, random assignment, treatment duration and length of follow-up measurements).



ies), Turkey (four studies), Switzerland (three studies) and one each in England, France, Malaysia, Oman, Iran, The Philippines and Thailand.

How effective is Montessori education?

On academic outcomes, **Montessori students performed about 1/4 of a standard deviation better than students in traditional education. The magnitude of these effects ... could be considered to be medium-large to large when compared to studies in real-world school contexts involving standardized tests.**

...

The effect sizes for academic outcomes are similar to those obtained in other studies that compared "No Excuses" charter schools to business-as-usual urban schools.

...

Montessori students performed about 1/3 of a standard deviation higher than students in traditional education on non-academic outcomes, including self-regulation (executive function), well-being at school, social skills and creativity.

The magnitude of Montessori education's effects was greater for ... preschool and elementary school than for middle and high school ...

What do the findings of the review mean?

Across a wide range of implementations (likely reflecting the range of Montessori implementations in the real world) ... **Montessori education has a nontrivial impact on children's academic and non-academic outcomes.**



It works for her

What studies are included?

From a search yielding over 2,000 studies, the **review evaluated 32 of the most rigorous Montessori studies**, with publication dates ranging from 1970 to 2020. Study participants were spread across age levels: preschool, elementary school and middle and high school.

The studies took place in eight countries: the USA (18 studies), Turkey (four studies), Switzerland (three studies) and one each in England, France, Malaysia, Oman, Iran, The Philippines and Thailand.

Book Review: VTS in Montessori Environments

This cognitive approach is more than just looking at pictures

JOHN P. BROOME

Young people today are inundated with visual images in television shows, advertisements, and social media, as passive consumers and as future citizens. This steady stream of visual stimulation raises several questions:

- Where are opportunities for students to become engaged with visual content? How can they develop curiosities around visuals that scaffold critical thinking and visual literacy activities?
- How can educators do this in a formal classroom environment to promote the growth of visually literate future citizens?

Using almost 30 years of research, the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector (NCMPS) and Philip Yenawine present the case for Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) as an opportunity to apply these strategies in the Montessori learning environment by centering engagement with art. The overall goal of VTS is to provide an accessible, transformative learning experience through an open-ended discussion of visual art that increases a student's literacy, language, and critical thinking skills.

VTS is a student-centered pedagogy in which the instructor selects a piece of art and then facilitates an inclusive discussion with carefully selected questions. Considering VTS and Montessori together creates a convergence of two pedagogies in which discussion, analysis, and writing about art are conduits to improving visual and critical thinking and enhancing language and social development.

VTS aligns well with the Montessori approach of integrating and discussing art throughout the curriculum, and this Playbook supports educators in developing their skills to incorporate these strategies in their classrooms. Five chapters comprise *Visual Thinking Strategies in Montessori Environments*. Chapter 1 connects VTS and the Montessori environment. Chapter 2 provides guidelines for facilitating lessons, and Chapter 3 connects the VTS approach with language development. Chapter 4 focuses on assessing VTS. The last chapter reflects on the future of the Montessori

environment, imagination, aesthetic development, and human potential.

VTS and Montessori education

In the past two decades, connecting art and the social studies curriculum through means such as the Visual Discovery method has become increasingly popular throughout traditional schools in the United States, often in textbook series. Created by Teachers' Curriculum Institute, the Visual Discovery method guides students to collect evidence, make inferences, and create hypotheses by analyzing visuals and sharing their thoughts through engaging activities such as graphic reading notes and dramatic role play. The Visual Discovery method often focuses on primary sources as artifacts, using academic language within the content area. Although engaging, this activity is often manufactured, with limited visual primary sources in prescriptive textbooks based on narrow state standards. The Visual Discovery approach lacks the depth, preparation, and formal training of VTS. The drawbacks of the Visual Discovery method have been widely discussed as a problem within traditional social studies classrooms. All of traditional education, not only social studies instruction, could benefit from a holistic approach to VTS.

VTS is a more authentic and holistic approach to visual source analysis than the Visual Discovery method. It is also grounded in cognitive science. When interwoven with the Montessori Method, VTS is open-ended, purposeful, and powerful for generating human creativity as well as criticality.

Visual Thinking Strategies in Montessori Environments focuses on the connection between VTS and Montessori education. The authors describe the strengths of both models of learning but argue that they are greater together: "We have gained an appreciation of how the two pedagogies align in purpose and in practice, putting students at the center of learning and creating opportunities for them to engage in critical thinking, complete conversations, and meaningful collaborations" The authors acknowledge that some readers may have gone through VTS training, so a goal of the book is to provide a companion guide that highlights connecting to, and focusing on, the Montessori learning environment, where art and the

appreciation of art are central to learning culture and language. However, the authors acknowledge that this book is not a substitute for formal VTS training.

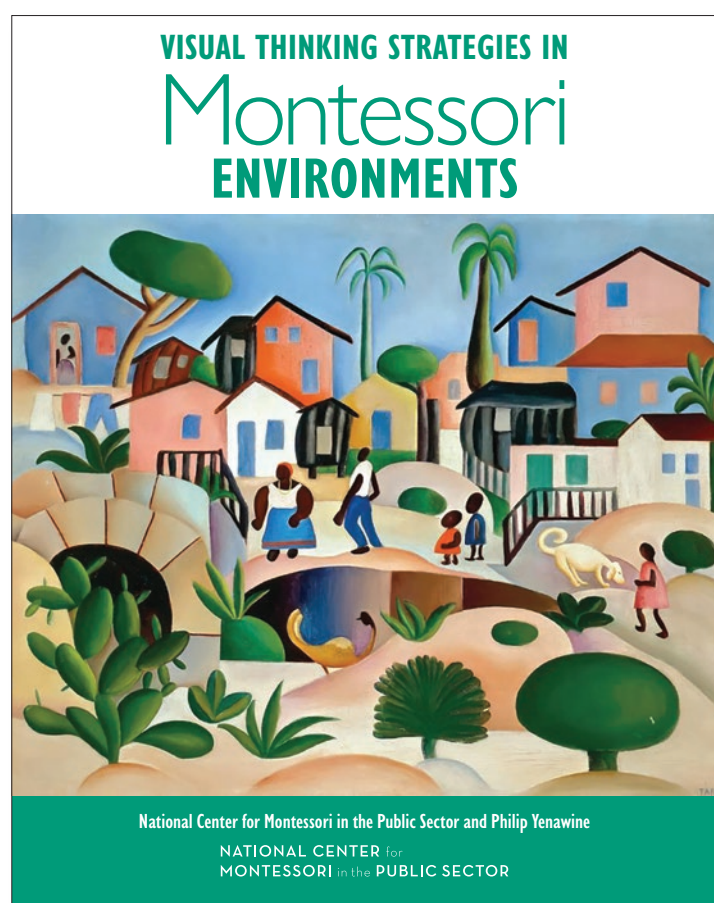
NCMPS and Yenawine further provide a rich history of the development of VTS at the intersection of museum-education practices and cognitive-psychology research with a focus on visual thinking—where "looking... shapes thinking". VTS proposes that looking, thinking, and talking, especially in a group, contribute to impactful social learning. Careful thought goes into connecting visual thinking and the three planes of childhood that form the foundation for Montessori education with attention to learner development, opportunities for growth, and connections to research. The sections that follow highlight pieces of each chapter, with commentary.

Facilitating a VTS session

Chapter 2 provides the "how" of the VTS pedagogy and detailed guidelines for facilitating lessons in a Montessori environment. When considering the imagery to use in teaching, the authors remind users to be provocative and engaging with their selections, to meet students where they are by selecting work that may connect with their existing knowledge but with enough ambiguity to lead to rich discussions. Educators can support students' curiosities, depending on their age, through cycles of questioning: "What is going on in this

picture? What do you see that makes you think that? What evidence supports that? What more can we find?"

Just as important as the questions, the authors remind readers of the responsibility of the instructor to actively listen, direct attention to the visual, paraphrase student comments, and be neutral in their interactions. Of particular note in this chapter is the focus on "the art of paraphrase" and "basic orienting vocabulary". How educators facilitate student-centered learning through open-ended questions and their ability to respond to students by paraphrasing their ideas are key to validating student thought. Particular care must be taken in activities such as these because they help build and maintain focus. This chapter provides examples of how to effectively



Buy the book:
[public-montessori.org/
tools/#vts](https://public-montessori.org/tools/#vts)

Take the course:
[public-montessori.org/
courses/vts-fall-2023/](https://public-montessori.org/courses/vts-fall-2023/)

facilitate a VTS session and how not to, including the consistent vocabulary necessary to describe what, and how to see a visual. Illustrative examples are also provided.

VTS and language development

In Chapter 3, the authors explore the intersection of VTS and language development at each plane of development and focus on the various educational opportunities offered for each age group. For the birth-to-age-three level, the authors provide readers with an appreciation of visual acuity's role in language acquisition, specifically related to the importance of naming and engaging in dialogue and the role of prepared Montessori environments. Because early childhood "is a time of

phrasing what the student says: "When we listen intently to accurately grasp a child's thoughts, and as we consider how to rephrase the comment, we are briefly seeing and thinking as the child does. We are following the child." Regarding the expansion of children's visual literacies, NCMPS and Yenawine present several VTS tools for "keeping track of this developmental arc" and monitoring student thinking by analyzing writing. It is extremely helpful that the authors not only outline the process but also provide several in-depth tools for, and examples of, assessing discussion and writing, including tracking types of talk, pre- and post-writing samples, writing rubrics, and progress reports. This tool kit gives educators rich examples of how to apply and assess VTS to capture student growth through various measures that

VTS aligns well with the Montessori approach of integrating and discussing art throughout the curriculum

rapid and often dramatic growth in thinking and communicating," the authors discuss the language explosion and emerging vocabulary at this stage. The authors emphasize the importance of conceptual and social exploration for elementary students. As part of this discussion, the authors examine the role of classroom communities in creating and inspiring a literate culture and the social nature of learning a language. Related to older children and adolescents, they say that "it's a time to practice intentional listening, increasing sophisticated interpretation and articulation of ideas, and collaborative processing. It is a time of very rapid and often dramatic growth in thinking and communicating". When older students become more comfortable with the VTS process, they can create "looking circles," like literature circles or book clubs, in which to practice looking and thinking skills with peer groups. The curiosities sparked by VTS in Elementary and Adolescent students provide both informal and formal writing opportunities like journaling, reflections, analysis, and synthesis of content.

Assessing VTS

The authors explain methods of data collection and assessment through direct observation for tracking student learning in Chapter 4. Key to this process are teacher reflection and para-

are appropriate for tracking student progress in a Montessori environment, as well as for evidence-based decision-making in a traditional classroom.

Further reflections

In the brief last chapter of this book, NCMPS and Yenawine restate their case for VTS in the Montessori environment. One area of needed future research is the potential social benefit of VTS research, which is rarely studied but often anecdotally discussed in Montessori schools. The authors also remind us of the challenges of careful listening and the need to purposefully model listening skills. Last, to realize the more peaceful world that Maria Montessori envisioned, they ask educators to cultivate opportunities for imagination in their students. If we are to invest in humanity, we must teach children empathy and care—and VTS can have a role in that.

In *Visual Thinking Strategies in Montessori Environments*, NCMPS and Yenawine create a practical text that provides readers with the foundations and procedures to create, facilitate, and assess VTS. The examples throughout are valuable to the hesitant practitioner, and the suggestions for further readings provide the curious mind with additional theoretical and empirical works to explore. For the trained (or untrained) VTS Montessori educator, this

text is a logical guide to supplementing instruction or introducing the strategies for the first time. Realistically, this volume is more than a supplemental guide for Montessori educators; any educator can use this Playbook as a framework for fostering visual literacy in their learning environment.

John P. Broome is a clinical associate professor of social studies education at Purdue University.



Montessori Tours and Travel offers small group tours specialising in Montessori's history and legacy.

Roelie Hartwig
Founder and Tour Guide
 Montessori specialist providing unique, personable & informative tours.



POSTCARD



SCAN HERE FOR UPCOMING TOURS



Montessori Tours and Travel

your window to the world -
and Montessori

 montessoritoursandtravel@gmail.com

Professional Development For Teachers and Assistants

CGMS offers webinars and online PD courses for every stage of the Montessori journey. Participants meet with their cohort once a week and are led by a master instructional guide. Classes include overviews for each level, working with children with special needs, arts, language, and many others!

LEARN MORE

www.cgms.edu/pd

info@cgms.edu

1-888-344-7897



In Memoriam

This spring, we learned of the passing of a beloved Milwaukee public Montessori teacher. Joan Peifer passed away on April 2, 2023. Her friends in the Milwaukee public Montessori community shared this remembrance.

Joan Peifer was a beloved Montessori guide who dedicated her life to students of the Milwaukee Public Schools. She worked in many positions and was both primary and elementary Montessori trained.

Ms. Peifer began her career in the 1970s as a primary guide. After working with the three-, four-, and five-year-old students, she became the school implementor. In the early 1980s, Ms. Peifer moved schools and taught in a lower elementary (first, second, and third grade) classroom. After that experience, she used her ever-growing knowledge guiding upper elementary (fourth, fifth, and sixth grade) students.

Ms. Peifer wisely realized that adolescent students would benefit greatly by

continuing with their Montessori education. In 1994 she took a leadership role in establishing and writing curriculum for a middle school program at MacDowell Montessori School. Her first class of 8th grade students graduated in 1999.

Ms. Peifer’s former middle school students remember her fondly for her patience and her positive, supportive, and loving attitude.

After guiding the 7th and 8th grade students for many years, Ms. Peifer became the math teacher leader and specialized in teaching mathematics and geometry to students of all ages—PK3 through 8th grade.

After Ms. Peifer retired from Milwaukee Public Schools, she did not stop working. She mentored Montessori teachers for years. Those teachers and their students benefitted greatly from Joan Peifer’s many years of Montessori experience and knowledge.

Joan Peifer was Montessori through and through.





MONTESSORI INSTITUTE OF NORTH TEXAS

3-6 PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY (PLC)

- Free Online Community
- Meets on the 1st Wednesday of every month
- A space for collaboration, communication, and support



MONTESSORI INSTITUTE
OF NORTH TEXAS

What's on your mind?

Write us a note, a letter, an article

MontessoriPublic is your voice as public Montessorians—quite literally. We share stories from classroom teachers, coaches, school leaders, families, researchers, and more, all reporting from their perspectives in the public Montessori world.

For the next issue, we want to hear what's on your mind. What's going well, what are you hoping for, what's keeping you up at night or coming into work in the morning?

If you're thinking about an article, here are some general guidelines:

How long should it be? Most of the articles in this issue are between 1500 and 2000 words, so you can see how that looks on the page, and how much room you have to tell your story.

What's the deadline? The final deadline for the Spring 2024 issue is **March 1, 2024**, but we would love to get started working with you now—that gives us plenty of time to get your piece just right.

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 "headshot" for the author images.

If you'd like your Montessori event featured in the next issue, send it to us!

Deadline for the next issue: **March 1, 2024.**

Be sure to include the date, organization, event title, city and state

Email to: editor@montessoripublic.org



“High resolution” usually means a file size of 1MB+. Add a short, one-line 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

October 6 – 7

Montessori Association of North Carolina Conference
CHARLOTTE, NC

October 21

United Montessori Schools of Indiana ANNUAL CONFERENCE
ANGOLA, IN

November 2–5

Montessori Foundation/International Montessori Council Conference
PHOENIX, AZ

November 4–5

Montessori Partnership of Georgia LITERACY CONFERENCE
SAVANNAH, GA

November 10–11

Wisconsin Montessori Association BUILDING INDEPENDENCE
MILWAUKEE, WI

December 7–8

Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE) Symposium
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA

January 6

Montessori Schools of Massachusetts ANNUAL CONFERENCE
FRANKLIN, MA

2024

January 13

University of Wisconsin La Crosse ANNUAL CONFERENCE
LA CROSSE, WI

February 16–19

AMI/USA THE MONTESSORI EXPERIENCE
DALLAS, TX

February 23–24

Association of Illinois Montessori Schools ANNUAL CONFERENCE
LISLE (CHICAGO), IL

March 7–10

American Montessori Society THE MONTESSORI EVENT
ORLANDO, FL

April 12–14

National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector EQUITY • ACCESS • SUSTAINABILITY
LEESBURG, VA (DC AREA)

Online Wellness Professional Development

Montessori Wellness
@montessoriwelness

0-3 & 6-12 Diploma Programs
Starting January 2024

montessori NORTHWEST
montessori-nw.org
an anti-bias anti-racist training center

A NONPROFIT INSTITUTE FOR EXPERIENCED & EMERGING MONTESSORI LEADERS

WHO WE ARE:
Whole School Leadership Institute (WSLI) is a nonprofit whose mission is to help school leaders show up more fully with courage, clarity, and vision through training tailored to Montessori school leaders.

WHAT WE DO:
We create peak professional learning and development opportunities that afford the integration of leadership skills and capacities, deep personal insight, and positive professional growth in order to be a transformative leader in Montessori educational communities in the world.

Scholarships are available
CALLED TO LEAD FUND

Called to Lead Fund (CTL) covers:
CTL covers full or partial school leadership course tuition or special projects for school leaders who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) or those who have significant financial hardship.

More information
QR code linking to info@wholeschoolleadership.org

CONSULTING AVAILABLE...
Personal and professional leadership coaching and consulting from top Montessorians. We help with:
♦ Organizational development
♦ Individual leadership coaching
♦ Strategic planning

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY MARYLAND
Institute graduates receive a leadership certificate from Loyola University

Questions? Email info@wholeschoolleadership.org www.wholeschoolleadership.org
A 501 (c) (3) Nonprofit Institute serving public, private and charter; all affiliations.



Gonzagarredi Montessori is back

Available exclusively from
The Montessori Classroom

GAMmontessori.com
844-807-9732