

MontessoriPublic.org

BRINGING MONTESSORI INTO THE PUBLIC CONVERSATION IN PRINT AND ONLINE • MONTESSORIPUBLIC.ORG • FALL 2025 • VOL 10 NUMBER 1

Access for all in the Research Triangle

30 years of public Montessori in Durham



DAVID AYER WITH KENGIE BASS
AND RITA RATHBONE

Durham Public Schools (DPS) is expanding its 30-year old system of public Montessori schools, adding a new middle school this year. DPS is a diverse, merged city and county school district of about 30,000 in North Carolina's dynamic and growing Research Triangle area. *MontessoriPublic* sat down with the Director of Magnet and Choice Programs Dr. Kengie Bass and District Magnet Specialist Dr. Rita Rathbone to hear about where the program came from and where it's going.

MontessoriPublic: Tell us the DPS public Montessori story.

Rita Rathbone: Durham Public Schools is like a lot of southern school districts that integrated much later than people might imagine.

People know about integration in the 50s, 60s, and 70s. But true integration in the South was more complicated. There were often multiple school districts, at the city and county level. Those districts were ostensibly integrated, but of course they had mirroring demographics: The city schools were often 90% students of color, and the county schools were 90% white. So they both "integrated," but they were separate entities and the end result was functionally segregation.

In the 90s a lot of that broke down, especially in North Carolina. We have 100 counties and we're down to 115 school districts—only 15 places where we still have that city versus county setup. The merges were about redundancy and financial efficiency but with a strong undertone of racial politics, naturally. Magnet programs were created to maintain diverse, integrated schools in the new system. Leaders at the time looked at the research about Montessori and chose the model for two former city



Delighted in Durham

schools in Durham. These were small neighborhood schools with physical buildings well suited to a Montessori environment.

So we began this big experiment with Montessori in the 90s. Those two schools, Morehead and George Watts,

survived the transition and grew and thrived and became extremely popular. Around 2010 there was a move to extend the program, and Lakewood Middle Montessori School opened. Last year we

continues on page 14 >

MontessoriPublic turns 10

Looking back on a decade in the movement



DAVID AYER

Nine years ago, the late Jackie Cossentino invited me to join the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector, to revive Denny Schapiro's much-loved newspaper *Public School Montessorian*. You can read more about Schapiro and his passionate dedication to journalism and public *Montessori in Public School Montessorian is Now MontessoriPublic*, reprinted from the first number of the

new paper on page 19 of this issue.

As you can read in that article, we weren't even sure we would print a paper—"Does anyone read print anymore?" I asked. Surely a website, a Facebook page, an email newsletter, and even a Twitter feed were more appropriate for a 21st century publication. But it turned out that Montessorians *do* love something they can get their hands on!

Since then, we've put out an incredible 21 issues of the paper, through political changes and a pandemic, covering the issues and sharing the stories that the public Montessori community—and the wider Montessori community—care deeply about. We mail one copy per teacher to every public Montessori program, one copy per school to every private Montessori school, plus copies

to Montessori organizations, training centers, and individual subscribers, building our circulation from 8,200 to 12,650 as our movement and audience have grown. I offer my deepest gratitude to everyone who has contributed work and supported us along the way. Let's take a look at some of the stops along the way. All of these stories are posted at [MontessoriPublic.org](https://montessoripublic.org), so you can catch up on them there if you missed an issue along the way.

Research

Perhaps the biggest trend we've tracked over the past ten years is the explosion of Montessori research. In 2016, there was just one substantial piece of

continues on page 19 >



TRAIN WITH PURPOSE. TRANSFORM THE FUTURE. START YOUR MONTESSORI JOURNEY AT MCM!

At Montessori Center of Minnesota (MCM), we strive to empower individuals through **education rooted in social justice**. Every program is part of our mission—transform lives and society by broadening access to the power of Dr. Maria Montessori’s proven method of education.

AMI Diploma Courses – YES! MCM has in-person options!

In-Person or Blended (combining online and in-person learning) AMI Diploma Courses
Available for 0-3, 3-6, and 6-12 levels.

Accelerate Your Path Toward a Degree

Earn credits toward a bachelor’s or master’s degree through our university partnerships.

Scholarships for People of the Global Majority and Needs-Based Tuition Assistance

Our scholarships and financial assistance options ensure access for every aspiring Montessori educator.

Payment Plan

Contact us to explore options—we’re here to support you! At MCM, we’re dedicated to making our programs accessible to all. We offer individually tailored payment plans to ensure you can pursue your Montessori education while honoring your financial realities.

Orientation Courses

Ideal for those working as assistants or just beginning to explore Montessori.

Workshops Designed for Real Impact

Responsive, community-centered learning—offered both in-person and online to fit your needs.

Own your growth and unlock your potential with support that champions your success.

Visit montessoricentermn.org to learn more and start your journey today!



When times are uncertain

Children deserve stability, teachers deserve support



SARA SUCHMAN

For those of you working with students whose families might not otherwise have access to Montessori education—in other words, for most readers of *MontessoriPublic*—your work depends on a delicate and essential web of public support. It depends on elected officials at every level and across every political persuasion to help keep your classroom doors open, fill your shelves with materials, and sustain environments worthy of children’s enormous potential.

Public Montessori schools have always faced funding challenges. Teacher preparation, classroom assistants, and the materials that bring Montessori to life all carry real costs—and too often, they must compete with other pressing needs in the public education landscape. Yet despite these struggles, the value proposition of Montessori education remains strong.

To parents and families, you promise that their children will experience learning that is deep, joyful, and enduring—that they will grow not only academically, but as capable, compassionate, and curious human beings. Families across the country have voted with their feet and their hearts by choosing Montessori.

To school boards and elected officials, your promise extends further. You offer an approach that builds a foundation

for lifelong learning, civic engagement, and contribution. A Montessori education nurtures the skills that society most urgently needs: focus, collaboration, self-regulation, empathy, and a sense of responsibility for one’s community. When we invest in these outcomes early, we save society the far greater costs of disengagement, remediation, and disconnection later.

But these promises depend on stability—on your ability to teach, learn, and grow without constant disruption. Research has shown what every Montessori guide already knows—that

adapt to shifting expectations, and to show up each day with patience, grace, and unwavering attention to the needs of children. You may not always manage it perfectly—no one could—but you do it with heart and integrity, again and again.

Montessori education was born in times of upheaval. Dr. Montessori’s work emerged amid global conflict and social transformation, grounded in the belief that education is the most powerful force for rebuilding and renewal. You stand in that same tradition today. Even as the world shifts around you, you

Families across the country have voted with their feet and their hearts by choosing Montessori

every year of learning matters deeply. Interruptions, whether from a pandemic, staffing shortage, or shifting policy priorities, leave a mark. For the child in your classroom, each day is an opportunity to build concentration, independence, and a sense of belonging. When those days are interrupted, so too is the fragile process of human development.

In times like these, when budgets are uncertain, you often find yourself at the mercy of forces far beyond your control. Funding shifts and bureaucratic changes are real and demanding challenges. Yet in the midst of this, you continue to create classrooms of peace, purpose, and possibility.

This is profoundly human work—and it asks nearly superhuman effort. You are called to set aside frustration, to

continue to prepare environments that nurture peace, agency, and respect.

In these unsettled times, one truth holds steady: children deserve stability, teachers deserve support, and the work of public Montessori education is a public good.

On behalf of all of us at NCMPS—and from me personally—thank you. Thank you for showing up every day with heart and purpose. Thank you for believing that children, given the right environment, will reveal to us the best of what humanity can be. Thank you for doing the hard work of holding steady in uncertain times.

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

MONTESSORI public

BRINGING MONTESSORI INTO THE
PUBLIC CONVERSATION
FALL 2025
VOLUME 10, NUMBER 1

- 1 **Access for all in the research triangle**
DAVID AYER WITH KENGIE BASS AND RITA RATHBONE
- 1 **MontessoriPublic turns 10**
DAVID AYER
- 3 **When times are uncertain**
SARA SUCHMAN
- 4 **Beyond the three period lesson**
JESS FRALEY
- 6 **Making irregular word study explicit**
JENNIFER DEMPSEY, KELLY A. POWELL-SMITH, AND LAURA SAYLOR
- 10 **Fundamental needs of public Montessorians**
CAROLINE ROBBINS
- 12 **Celebrating 10 years of indispensable public conversation**
- 20 **Observing the Montessori community**
DAVID AYER
- 22 **Public School Montessorian is now MontessoriPublic**
DAVID AYER
- 23 **Tell us your story**
- 23 **THE PUBLIC CALENDAR**

In this issue: Research and reflection

In this issue we look back on ten years of *MontessoriPublic*, make some observations of the Montessori community via the Montessori Census, and share some school- and classroom-level research from Montessorians in the field.

David Ayer looks back on the big stories in the Montessori movement that we have covered in the pages of *MontessoriPublic* over the last decade, and shares new insights from the Montessori Census.

Dr. Kengie Bass and **Dr. Rita Rathbone** from Durham Public Schools recount the history of the

district’s Montessori program and the new developments there.

Jennifer Dempsey, Kelly A. Powell-Smith, and Laura Saylor share new research into reading and sight words.

Jess Fraley offers a research-backed addition to the traditional Montessori Sandpaper Letter lesson.

Caroline Robbins shares the results of her study of teacher evaluation systems in public Montessori.

Sara Suchman reflects on the people that make up the public Montessori movement.



COMING SPRING 2026:

THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC MONTESSORI

Read more on page 23

MONTESSORI
public

Reach out to editor@montessoripublic.org

Our next issue will be in May, 2026.

More guidelines on page 23.

Beyond the three period lesson

Research suggests a new step in the lesson



JESS FRALEY

In recent years, the Science of Reading (SoR) has gained much attention, and for good reason. It is not a buzzword or a fad. Like the term “Montessori,” it can be misleading because anyone can use it regardless of their fidelity to practice. The term SoR refers to the massive amount of research accumulated over the past 50 years about how the brain learns to read, what works, what doesn’t, and why.

As an AMI trainer-in-training, I began looking at this body of research to help me understand how the brain learns to read and how our practices for supporting emerging literacy in the Children’s House align. What I’ve learned has deeply affirmed our core principles and practices as Montessori practitioners and been informative about what we can do better.

One of the first things I validated was using keyword picture cards with the Sandpaper Letters. When I added these cards to the classroom (fixed to the wall behind each letter, displayed on long, narrow wall shelves), I saw success manifest right before my eyes because it supplemented the work with the Sandpaper Letters; they helped forge the neural connection between meaning and an arbitrary symbol for a sound. I

was pleased to find later that Maria Montessori wrote, “To every letter of the alphabet, there corresponded a picture... the name of which began with the letter in question,” describing precisely these alphabet picture cards. Current literature provided further affirmation, where mnemonics have been shown to aid the development of sound-symbol correspondence.

I also began to use little booklets for record-keeping of Sandpaper Letter lessons, which were placed on the shelf for the children’s free choice. I would write the child’s name on the booklet’s front cover. On the back cover, all the letters were printed in a font and color that matched the Sandpaper Letters to keep track of their lessons in the same way as a record-keeping card (underlining a letter each time a lesson was given,

circling it when the sound-symbol correspondence was solidly demonstrated).

At the end of the lesson, I wrote each letter on a page of their booklet, along with some of the keywords we thought

chalkboard much earlier, a tip from one of my trainers who visited my classroom as a consultant. When I saw that children could make intentional shapes in their drawings, I knew they could be-

I have been incorporating letter names into Sandpaper Letter lessons

of at the beginning. This approach provided a model for handwriting and a rationale for letter learning. These little lists of words then became an excellent support for retaining sound-symbol correspondence over time.

Letters would be reviewed frequently over the days following a lesson. If the child couldn’t remember the sound represented by a letter, I would read their words to see if that prompted their memory of the sound—it frequently did. Then, I would provide more command games and bring me games with that letter. If it didn’t, I knew I needed to give another three-period lesson.

I also introduced handwriting on a

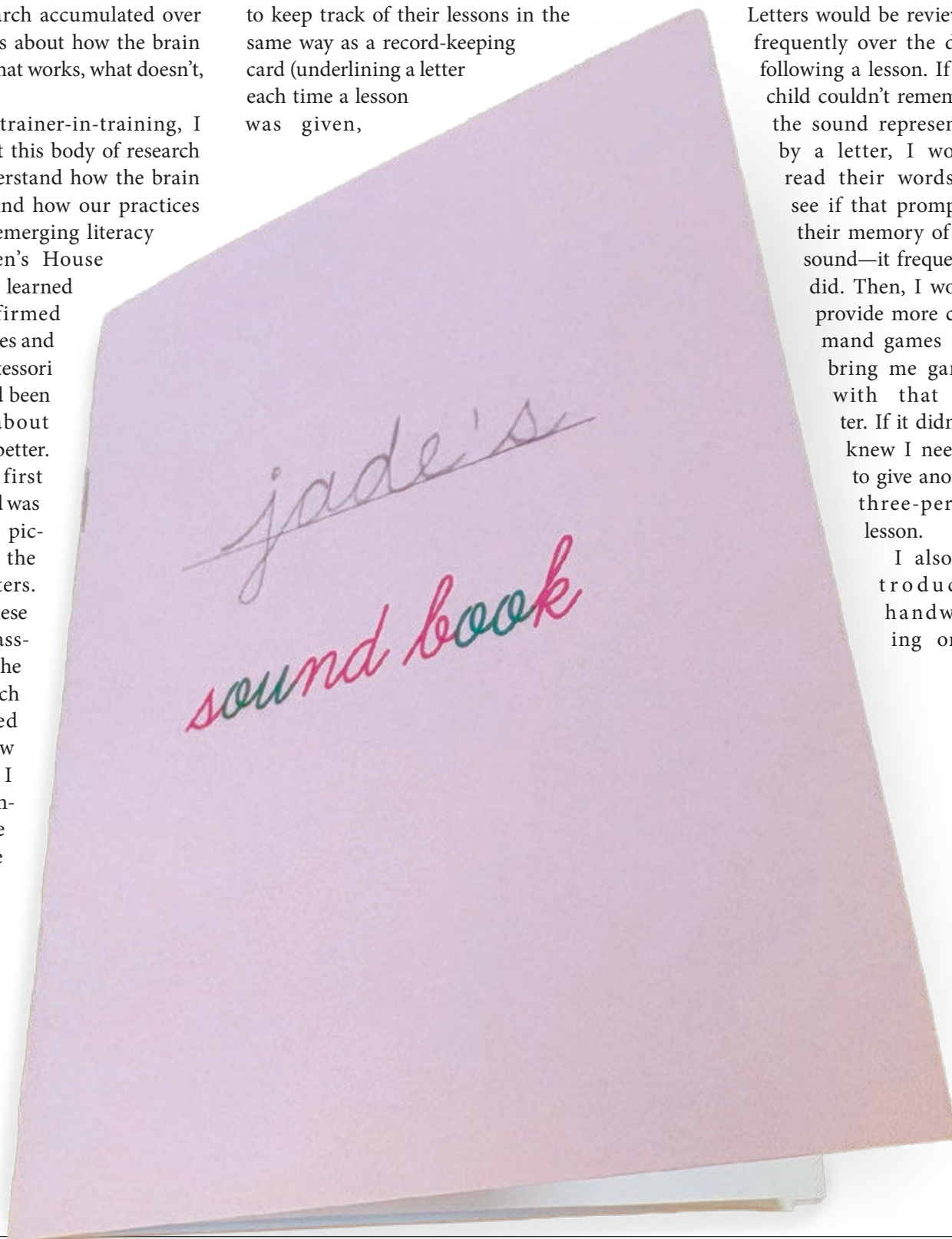
gin to practice letters with chalk, creating another opportunity to practice sound-symbol correspondence. As it turns out, this early exploration of letter forms is an important part of emerging sound-symbol correspondence.

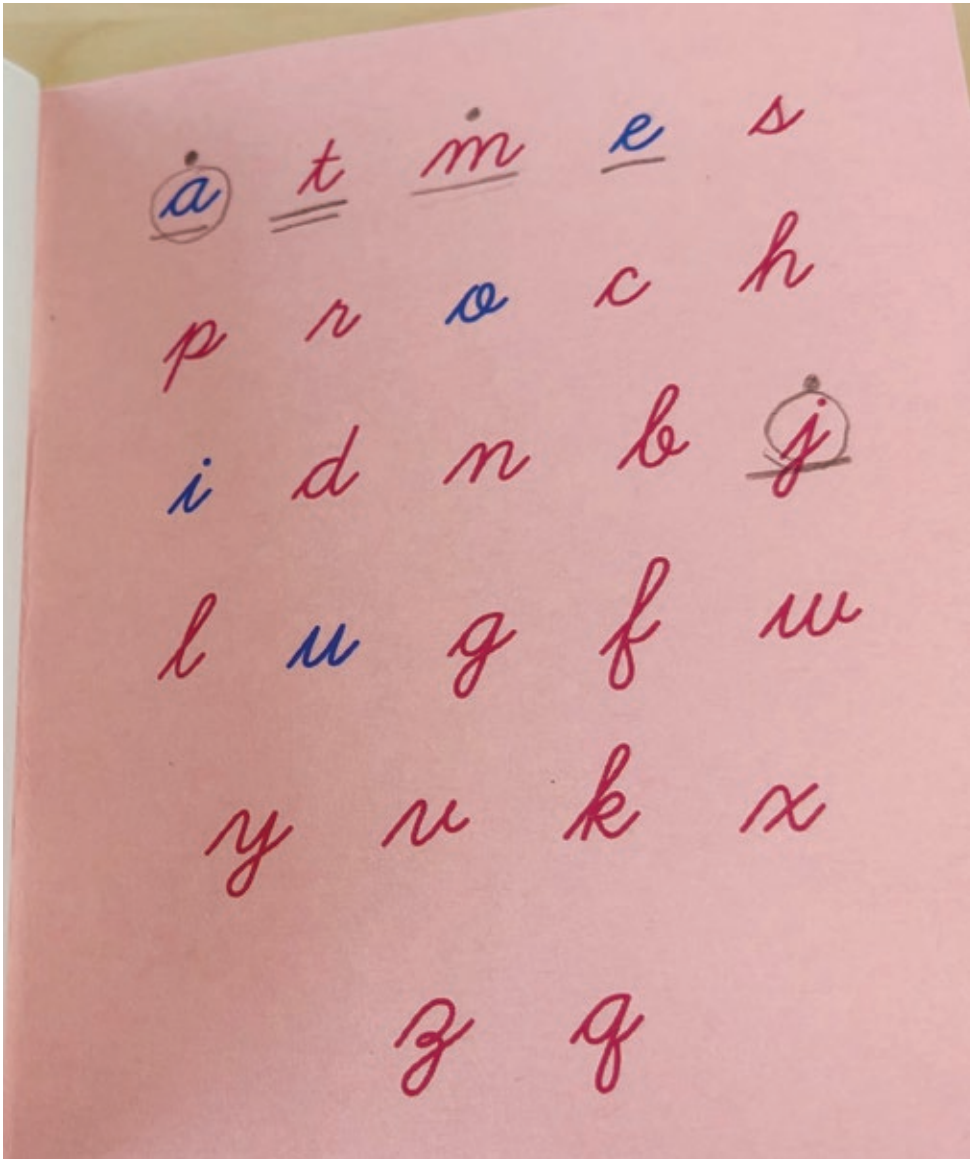
It’s no wonder that early handwriting is significant to becoming literate—when we see a letter, groups of neurons work together to recognize and assemble letter features. The experience of repetition with the naturally occurring variation of letter forms in handwriting helps our brains to identify those letters more efficiently.

Another more recent technique I have been working on is intentionally incorporating letter names into Sandpaper Letter lessons while retaining the focus on sound. The 2008 “Developing Early Literacy” report published by the National Early Literacy Panel identified six variables with a large predictive relationship to later measures of literacy—**alphabet knowledge** (identifying and/or producing the name, sound, and form of letters), **phonological awareness**, rapid **automatized naming of letters or numbers**, rapid **automatized naming of objects or colors**, **writing individual letters or one’s name**, and **phonological memory**.

A 2019 study showed that lessons using paired-associative learning (incorporating letter names, sounds, and forms) provided the most significant gains in alphabet knowledge. Similarly, a 2010 study found that children receiving instruction on letter names and sounds were more successful at learning letter sounds than those receiving instruction on sound only. These findings suggest the importance of intentionally incorporating letter-name learning into early alphabet instruction, such as using the phrasing of “A spells /a/,” which leads nicely into phonogram work where sounds are spelled with two letters!

We know that when we give a lesson, it is an introduction to the material,





Children can track their own progress.

and the learning happens through the child’s work with the material. So, we must consider what this looks like when a lesson is largely teacher-directed, especially for children who need many repetitions before the neural connections are solidified. What can we do to bring the learning alive? All of these techniques opened up additional opportunities for

working with letters in the Children’s House spontaneously, joyfully, and playfully.

Jess Fraley is an AMI 3-6 Trainer and Community Events Coordinator at Montessori Northwest.

References

Dehaene, S. (2010). *Reading in the brain: the new science of how we read*. Penguin Books.

James, K. & Engelhardt, L. (2012). The effects of handwriting experience on functional brain development in pre-literate children. *Trends in Neuroscience Education*. 2012 December; 1(1): 32–42.

Montessori, Maria. (1949). *The discovery of the child*. (Mary A. Johnstone, Trans.) Kalakshetra Press.

Piasta, S., Purpura, D., & Wagner, R. (2010). Fostering alphabet knowledge development: a comparison of two instructional approaches. *Reading and Writing*. July 2010, 23(6), pp. 607-626.

Piasta, S. (2023). The science of early alphabet instruction. *Handbook on the Science of Early Literacy*, pp 83-94. United Kingdom: Guilford Publications.

Roberts, T., Vadasy, P., & Sanders, E. (2019). Preschoolers’ alphabet learning: cognitive, teaching sequence, and English proficiency influences. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 0(0) pp. 1-25.

Wolf, M. (2018). *Reader come home: the reading brain in a digital world*. Harper Collins.

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, Kengie Bass, Jennifer Dempsey, Jess Fraley, Kelley A. Powell-Smith, Rita Rathbone, Caroline Robbins, Laura Saylor, and Sara Suchman

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 2025 National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector

public-montessori.org

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 an expert instructional guide. Classes include overviews for each level, supporting diverse learners, language, and many others!

info@cgms.edu WWW.CGMS.EDU/PD 1-888-344-7897



Making irregular word study explicit

A quantitative research study in a Montessori classroom



JENNIFER DEMPSEY,
KELLY A. POWELL-SMITH, AND
LAURA SAYLOR

Red words. Heart words. Puzzle words. Sight words. High frequency words. You might have learned how to teach these tricky words in your training. Are they all the same thing, and what is the evidence-based method to teach these words for reading and spelling mastery?

When asked in a Montessori social media group about educators' experiences and training in teaching irregular words in the classroom, guides' feedback was generally unanimous. Either they had received no explicit training in irregular word instruction, or they were taught to have students memorize the words as whole units on flashcards. Many commenters chimed in, sharing that they sought additional training in Orton-Gillingham, the Science of Reading, or structured literacy after completing their Montessori training to better equip themselves to teach reading and spelling, including the explicit instruction of irregular words. The

shift from rote memorization to a more analytical approach reflects a broader understanding of how children learn to read and spell effectively.

Recently, there has been an increasing interest in the research and application of irregular word instruction. The rote memorization of hundreds of words does not align with reading research. This method overlooks the importance of storing letter and sound associations in memory. Even words

regarded as highly irregular in English may have sufficient regularity to be successfully decoded and encoded. Instead of having students memorize long lists of irregular words, we can teach them to read and spell by finding the parts of the word that break the rules and the parts that do not. Words stick when their meanings, pronunciations (sounds), and spellings are combined. As high-frequency words lie along a spectrum of irregularity, with most following some regular sound-spelling correspondences, students can still use their phonics knowledge and skills to analyze high-frequency words. Therefore, educators need to discontinue the drill-and-kill method of rote memorization of all irregular words and move toward a more research-based method of analyzing

sound-spelling associations. As one goal of reading is for every word to become a sight word, educators must implement teaching practices that enable students to read and spell irregular words instantly and effortlessly. This study explored if there was a functional relationship between the type of irregular word spelling instruction and irregular word spelling skills.

Frequently, educators use the terms sight words, high-frequency words, and irregular words synonymously, which can be confusing. Any word, whether decodable or irregular, read fluently and effortlessly is considered a sight word. Any word, whether decodable or irregular, appearing in print frequently is considered a high-frequency word. Irregular words are those that contain

quences (graphemes) for spelling. This connection assists with storing words in memory for instant and effortless retrieval so that they become sight words.

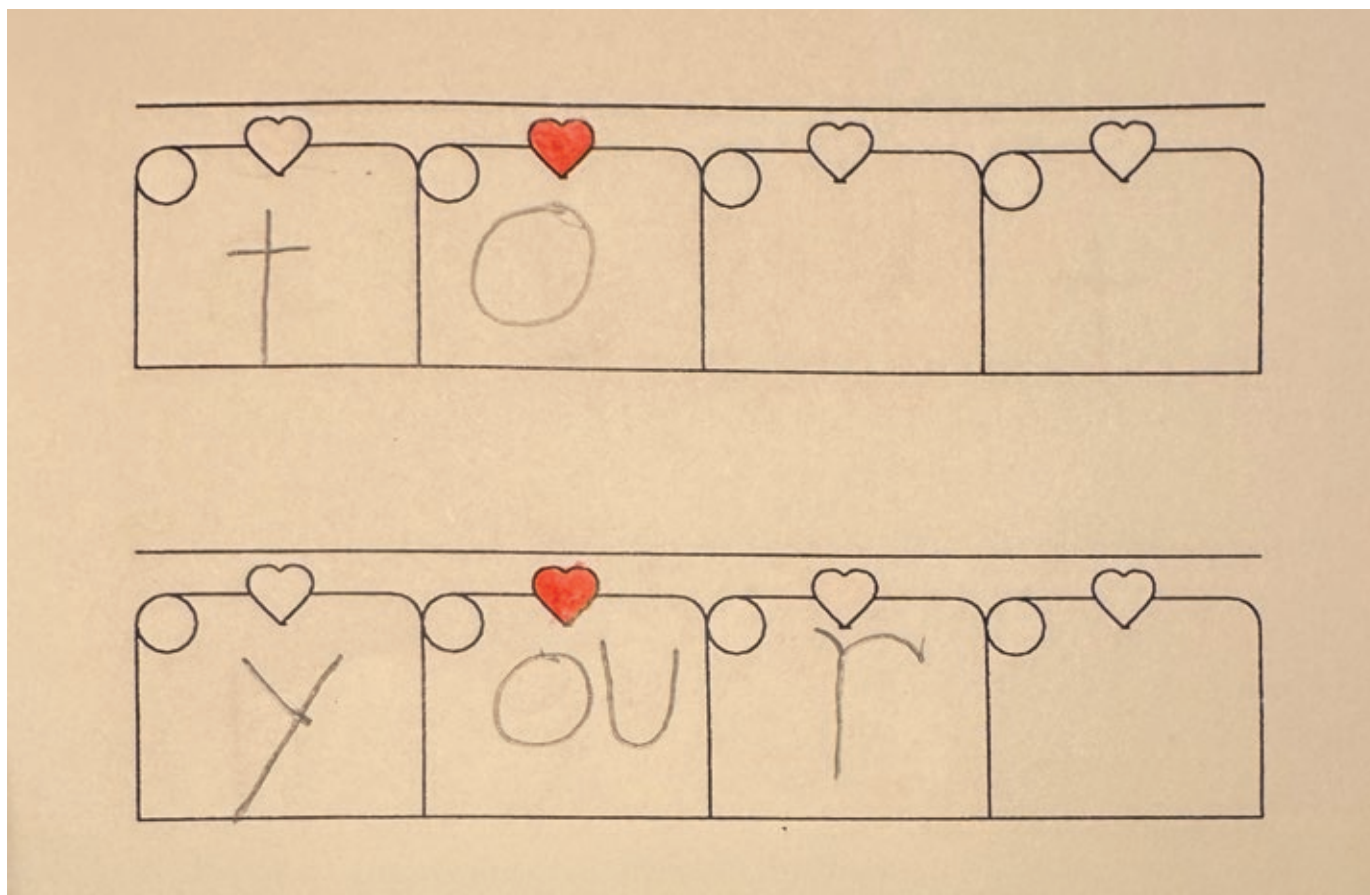
Importance of explicit irregular word instruction

Learning irregular words is important because it supports the formation of a robust sight word vocabulary, enhancing reading and spelling skills. While often perceived as highly irregular, the English language is characterized by a high degree of phonological consistency. Most letters in irregularly spelled words conform to grapheme-phoneme conventions. Researchers have suggested that only about 4% of English words are truly irregular. Therefore, explicit instruction in analyzing irregular words' phonetic and irregular components should be manageable.

In a 2020 article, reading scholar Linnea Ehri proposed that it is vital for students to make a connection between the graphemes and the phonemes of all words to help bond the spellings and pronunciations. Even in words that do not follow typical sound-spelling patterns, some parts of the word can be decoded by readers. Knowledge of the components of words (irregular and decodable) can assist with orthographic mapping, therefore assisting with storing words in memory as sight words.

Integrating irregular word instruction

emphasizing systematic phonics that specifically targets grapheme-phoneme correspondences and exceptions to typical sound-spelling patterns can improve reading skills, even among struggling readers. Irregular word spelling instruction can increase students' sight word recognition, contributing to more fluent reading and more skilled spelling. By incorporating irregular word instruction into literacy practices, educators can help students develop a deeper under-



Grapho-Phonemic Mapping in action

ing the parts of words that remain phonetic and the parts that do not follow English phonetic rules.

Irregular words challenge students because they only partially follow standard English spelling rules and patterns. They contain unique spellings and pronunciations that are difficult to memorize. Irregular words often require more practice and repetition than regular (decodable) words because of the complexity and unpredictability of the

exceptions to the typical sound-spelling patterns in their grapho-phonemic correspondences, either temporarily (because the student has not yet learned the phonics pattern) or permanently (because the graphemes represented will never adhere to the rules and patterns of the English language). Orthography refers to the correct spelling of words. Orthographic mapping is the process by which readers connect the sounds of letters (phonemes) to their correct letter se-



Merging two techniques and materials

standing of the rules, patterns, and exceptions to the English language. Such instructional practices can increase students’ sight word knowledge), fluency reading, and encoding skills.

In a recent study, we examined a potential functional relationship between the type of irregular word spelling instructional approach and an increase in students’ irregular word spelling skills.

Seven first-grade students from a Montessori classroom were randomly assigned to two groups. One group received instruction utilizing techniques to analyze and understand irregular words’ phonetic and exception components (a grapho-phonemic approach). Another group received instruction utilizing techniques to memorize unanalyzed irregular words as whole units displayed on flashcards.

After four weeks of instruction in each intervention group, the students switched so that each group received instruction in each approach. The groups received instruction in the other approach for an additional four weeks. We collected data for 11 weeks using

weekly cumulative irregular word spelling assessments. By collecting data for all participants receiving instruction in both methods, we measured how skills produced by these two approaches contributed to the spelling of whole irregular words and correct letter sequences within irregular words. These data helped determine which type of irregular word spelling instruction demonstrated a functional relationship to increased irregular word spelling skills.

The findings provided some initial support for the alternative hypothesis that a functional relationship does exist between irregular word spelling instruction and irregular word spelling skills of first-grade students. Overall, the pattern across students suggested a slight advantage of the grapho-phonemic intervention relative to the flashcard intervention, regardless of the order. The results of this study are generally consistent with previous research indicating that instruction for irregular words should emphasize a grapho-phonemic

continues on page 8 >

Grapho-Phonemic Mapping

Italicized type: what the teacher does
Bold type: what the teacher says
Magenta type: what the student says

Introduction of Word

Teacher says the word and uses it in a sentence:

Said. She said hello to me. What’s the word?

said

Let’s tap the sounds we hear in the word said

Teacher and students segment sounds using fingers to count how many sounds.

/s/ /e/ /d/

How many sounds in said?

3

Teacher draws a line on the board to represent each sound while saying the sounds.

/s/ /e/ /d/

What is the word?

said

Mapping of Word

What is the first sound we hear in the word said?

/s/

What letter usually spells the /s/ sound?

s

Teacher writes “s” on the first line.

What is the word?

said

What is the next sound we hear in the word said?

/e/

What letter usually spells the /e/ sound?

e

That is correct, but in the word said we spell the /e/ sound with the letters ‘ai’.

Teacher writes “ai” on the line in red and then draws a heart above the letters.

The letters ‘ai’ in the word said are the parts we have to remember by heart because they are tricky.

What is the last sound we hear in the word said?

/d/

What letter usually spells the /d/ sound?

d

Teacher writes “d” on the last line.

Review of Word

Teacher will pass out paper with lines already drawn for each sound of each word.

Now, get out your paper and pencil and let’s review the word. What word did we spell?

said

What’s the first sound we hear in the word said? /s/ What letter usually spells the /s/ sound?

s

Now, you write the letter “s” on the first line.

What is the next sound we hear in the word said?

/ë/

That is correct. In the word said the /ë/ sound is tricky, so which letters do we use to spell the /e/ sound?

ai

Yes, now you write the letters “ai” on the next line and draw a heart above it because they are tricky.

What is the last sound we hear in the word said?

/d/

What letter usually spells the /d/ sound?

d

Now, you write the letter “d” on the last line.

What are the letters that spell said?

s-a-i-d

Irregular word study

Continued from page 7

approach. Several studies support the process of active engagement with the spelling of irregular words, highlighting systematic phonics and grapho-phoneme relations in irregular words. These studies underscore the significance of these instructional strategies in enhancing students' reading and spelling proficiencies. By focusing on the connection between letter-sound correspondences in irregular words, educators can better support learners in orthographic mapping these words to their permanent sight word storage.

Implications for irregular word instruction

The findings of this study and the data presented in other literature suggest that educators should incorporate evidence-based practices into their instruction for irregular word spelling support. These practices include emphasizing the grapho-phonemic components of irregular words by drawing attention to parts of the word that follow expected sound-symbol patterns and the parts of the words that do not. (See Grapho-Phonemic Mapping on the previous page.)

As follow-up work to aid in continuous exposure, students can use the movable alphabet to spell irregular words by placing a small, laminated heart above the part of the word that is an exception to the sound-spelling rule or pattern. This approach supports the theory of orthographic mapping in which the sound and symbol (and meaning) of a word are linked together to create a mental representation of words to be stored in long-term memory for effortless retrieval. This approach is particularly important for irregular words, as understanding their grapho-phonemic components helps contribute to the long-term storage of irregular words in readers' sight word vocabulary memory.

Jennifer Dempsey is the Director of Teaching and Learning at the Montessori School of Maui.

Dr. Kelly A. Powell-Smith is a Professor of Reading Science at Mount St. Joseph University.

Dr. Laura Saylor is the Dean of the School of Education at Mount St. Joseph University.

References

Arra, C. T., & Aaron, P. G. (2001). Effects of psycholinguistic instruction on spelling performance. *Psychology in the Schools, 38*(4), 357-363.

Bhattacharya, A., & Ehri, L. C. (2004). Graphosyllabic analysis helps adolescent struggling readers read and spell words. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 37*(4), 331-348.

Brunsdon, R., Coltheart, M., & Nickels, L. (2005). Treatment of irregular word spelling in developmental surface dysgraphia. *Cognitive Neuropsychology, 22*(2), 213-251.

Colenbrander, D., Wang, H. C., Arrow, T., & Castles, A. (2020). Teaching irregular words: What we know, what we don't know, and where we can go from here. *The Educational and Developmental Psychologist, 37*(2), 97-104.

Colenbrander, D., Kohnen, S., Beyersmann, E., Robidoux, S., Wegener, S., Arrow, T., & Castles, A. (2022). Teaching children to read irregular words: A comparison of three instructional methods. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 26*(6), 545-564.

Cuvo, A. J., Ashley, K. M., Marso, K. J., Zhang, B. L., & Fry, T. A. (1995). Effect of response practice variables on learning spelling and sight vocabulary. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 28*(2), 155-173.

Ehri, L. C. (2005). Learning to read words: Theory, findings, and issues. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 9*(2), 167-188.

Ehri, L. C. (2014). Orthographic mapping in the acquisition of sight word reading, spelling memory, and vocabulary learning. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 18*(1), 5-21.

Ehri, L. C. (2020). The science of learning to read words: A case for systematic phonics instruction. *Reading Research Quarterly, 55*, 545-560.

Ehri, L. C. (2024). Clarifying the role of orthographic mapping in sight word reading. *The Reading League Journal, 5*(1), 4-12.

Harm, M. W., & Seidenberg, M. S. (2004). Computing the meanings of words in reading: Cooperative division of labor between visual and phonological processes. *Psychological Review, 111*(3), 662.

Johnston, R., McGeown, S., & Moxon, G. E. (2014). Towards understanding how children read and spell irregular words: The role of nonword and orthographic processing skills. *Journal of Research in Reading, 37*(1), 51-64.

Joshi, R. M., Treiman, R., Carreker, S., & Moats, L. C. (2008). How words cast their spell. *American Educator, 32*(4), 6-16.

McArthur, G., Castles, A., Kohnen, S., Larsen, L., Jones, K., Anandakumar, T., & Banales, E. (2015). Sight word and phonics training in children with dyslexia. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 48*(4), 391-407.

Miles, K. P., Ehri, L. C., & Lauterbach, M. D. (2016). Mnemonic value of orthography for vocabulary learning in monolinguals and language minority English-speaking college students. *Journal of College Reading and Learning, 46*(2), 99-112.

Miles, K. P., Rubin, G. B., & Gonzalez-Frey, S. (2018). Rethinking sight words. *Reading Teacher, 71*(6), 715-726.

Miles, K. P., McFadden, K. E., & Ehri, L. C. (2019). Associations between language and literacy skills and sight word learning for native and nonnative English-speaking kindergartners. *Reading and Writing, 32*(7), 1681-1704.

Moats, L. C. (2005). How spelling supports reading. *American Educator, 6*(12-22), 42.

Ouellette, G., & Sénéchal, M. (2008). Pathways to literacy: A study of invented spelling and its role in learning to read. *Child development, 79*(4), 899-913.

Rawlins, A., & Invernizzi, M. (2019). Reconceptualizing sight words: Building an early reading vocabulary. *The Reading Teacher, 72*(6), 711-719.

Savage, R., Georgiou, G., Parrila, R., & Maiorino, K. (2018). Preventative reading interventions teaching direct mapping of graphemes in texts and set-for-variability aid at-risk learners. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 22*(3), 225-247.

Schlesinger, N. W., & Gray, S. (2017). The impact of multisensory instruction on learning letter names and sounds, word reading, and spelling. *Annals of dyslexia, 67*, 219-258.

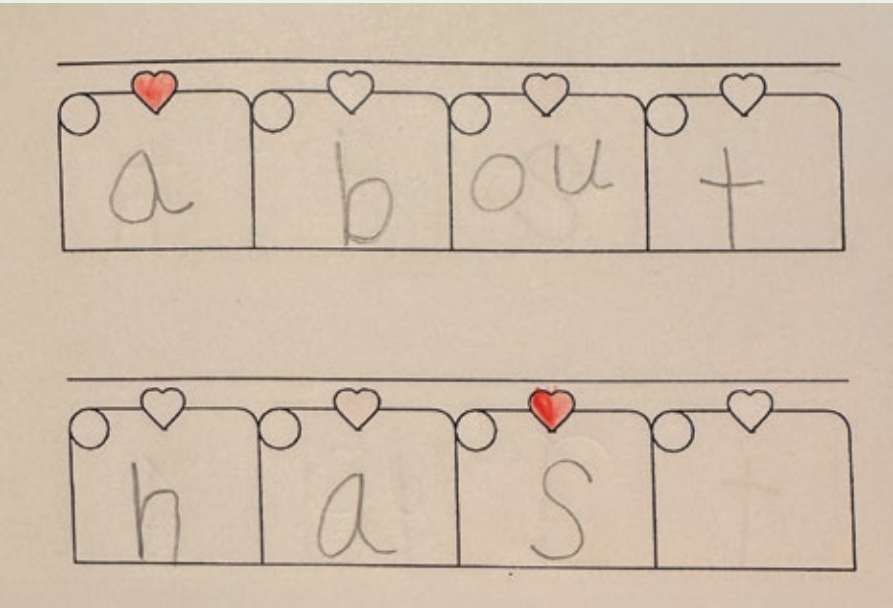
Share, D. L. (1995). Phonological recoding and self-teaching: Sine qua non of reading acquisition. *Cognition, 55*(2), 151-218.

Simonsen, F., & Gunter, L. E. E. (2001). Best practices in spelling instruction: A research summary. *Journal of Direct Instruction, 1*(2), 97-105.

Steady, L. M., Wade-Woolley, L., Rueckl, J. G., Pugh, K. R., Elliott, J. D., & Compton, D. L. (2019). The role of set for variability in irregular word reading: Word and child predictors in typically developing readers and students at-risk for reading disabilities. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 23*(6), 523-532.

Treiman, R. (2017). Learning to spell <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888438.2017.1296449> words: Findings, theories, and issues. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 21*(4), 265-276.

Weiser, B., & Mathes, P. (2011). Using encoding instruction to improve the reading and spelling performances of elementary students at risk for literacy difficulties: A best-evidence synthesis. *Review of Educational Research, 81*(2), 170-200.



AMS Affiliated
MACTE Accredited
Approved by Maryland
Higher Ed. Commission

Quality teacher
education since 1980

barrie.org

13500 Layhill Road,
Silver Spring, MD 20906

Barrie Institute

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, 9-12)
- Dedicated and experience faculty
- Beautiful 45-acre campus on which to learn and explore
- Internship opportunities available at Barrie Montessori



Contact us today! 301.576.2866 | iams@barrie.org

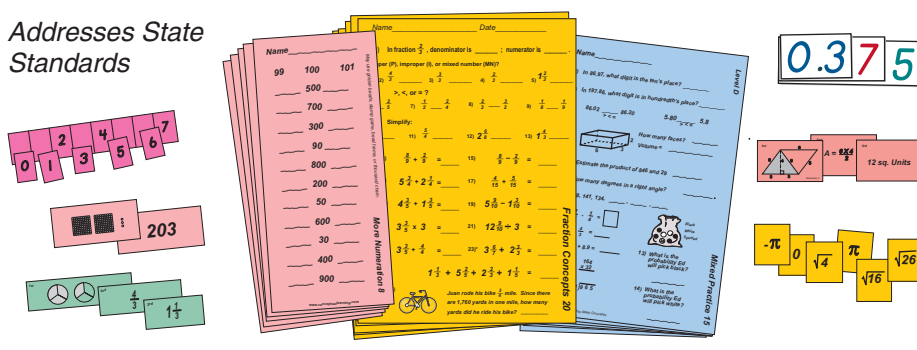


Conceptual Learning Materials

Bridges concrete and abstract

Cardstock, reproducible masters, & digital downloads

Addresses State Standards



www.conceptuallearning.com 866-618-9421

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](http://www.montessorilibrary.com)





Houston Montessori Center

Est. 1971

Montessori Teacher Education For All Levels

COURSES

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

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

AMS Affiliated. Accredited by MACTE.

7807 Long Point Road, Suite 100
Houston, Texas 77055
713-465-7670

HoustonMontessoriCenter.org

Fundamental needs of public Montessorians

Teacher evaluation and professional growth



CAROLINE ROBBINS

As Montessorians, we constantly weave together theory and practice, integrating the vision – the “why” – with the reality – the “what” and “how.” As a public Montessori administrator and doctoral student, I have encountered a professional growth point doubling as a research inquiry. As an administrator, in my first year evaluating and supervising Montessori teachers, I wondered: how can we work within our existing teacher evaluation framework to support Montessori-aligned, collaborative growth? How can we infuse the process of teacher evaluation with Montessori values of growth, friendliness with error, and choice? How can we support developmental principles beyond the fourth plane of development, to nurture human flourishing throughout adulthood? As a doctoral student, I looked at existing research and found a gap relating to how teacher evaluation may shape the professional growth of public Montessori teachers.

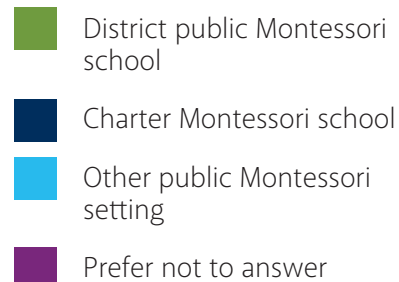
School districts in the U.S. are increasingly adopting the Montessori approach with hopes of boosting student achievement, diversifying student populations, and attracting families. As the number of public Montessori schools in the U.S. increases, so does the number of Montessori teachers who are assessed in mandated teacher evaluation systems. As both a practitioner and scholar, I wondered: how can we use teacher evaluation in a way that aligns with Montessori values? What is working well? And what might be better?

Through my studies with the Whole School Leadership Institute, I became familiar with the work of Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey, who have explored “Deliberately Developmental Organizations” and the qualities that support meaningful professional growth. This theory provided a foundation for me as I began to develop feedback skills, and so did my district’s training on effective feedback conver-

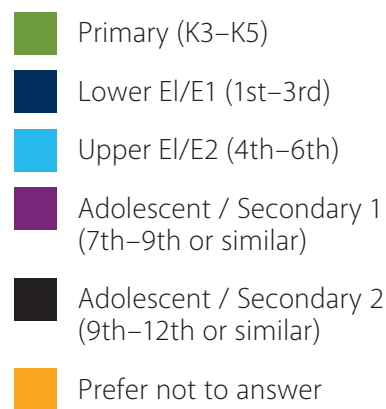
sations. However, I wanted to go deeper and hear directly from teachers about their experiences with professional growth and helpful aspects of teacher appraisal. So, I asked teachers: what would it take to make teacher evaluation more Montessori-friendly?

Last year, I conducted a pilot study, a qualitative survey of current public Montessori teachers from across the U.S. Participants were currently employed in public Montessori settings, including both district and charter schools, and they represented a range across grades K3-12, or Primary through Secondary. This pilot has represented an initial ex-

Participants’ Settings



Participants’ Teaching Levels



ploration, Phase One for my upcoming dissertation research, but it uncovered some interesting findings on its own. In this study, I inquired how Montessori schools can facilitate professional growth in a holistic, collaborative, and growth-oriented way. At the onset of this pilot study, I pursued the following questions:

- What are the experiences of public Montessori educators in the

U.S. with their teacher evaluation systems?

- How do teacher evaluation systems influence or impact public Montessori educators’ professional growth?

Findings

Study participants described a wide range of experiences relating to their teacher evaluation and opportunities for professional growth. From the study, it became clear that districts and schools are varying greatly in the degree to which their teacher evaluation measures are infused with Montessori values such

that “My school has allowed me to grow professionally as a leader.” Others expressed more critical opinions, calling their teacher evaluation structures “a punishment” or “gotcha,” and noting, “I have noticed that the past systems have had good intentions, but the amount of staff time needed to fulfill the responsibilities was not sustainable.”

In spite of this range of Montessori-aligned teacher evaluation and variety of teacher perceptions, participants’ responses shared many commonalities. From participants’ words, four main categories emerged, housing thirteen salient themes. I identified the categories as **alignment**, **meaning**, **support**, and **choice**. Each category included various themes, including **cohesion**, **consistency**, **growth orientation**, **relationships**, **relevance**, **moving beyond compliance**, **admin buy-in**, **time**, **money**, **tools**, **flexibility**, **autonomy**, and **self-direction**. Overall, these themes seemed to correspond to the needs of public Montessori educators regarding professional growth. The themes also offer three main takeaways that we, as public Montessorians, can weave into our practice to support adult developmental growth.

A first recurring theme in the participants’ comments involved the importance of having **administrator buy-in**, whether in the form of Montessori training for school leaders, or simply in a Montessori mindset or more holistic view of growth and progress. One participant noted, “[My state’s teacher assessment] can align with Montessori philosophy in the hands of the right administrator. It is mostly a lack of administrative understanding of the role of the Montessorian or how to translate the criteria into Montessori.” This theme speaks to the importance of recruitment of leaders with Montessori backgrounds, and the prioritization of Montessori training, whether pursuing an actual teacher credential, or an administrator course, such as Whole School Leadership Institute.

A second theme involved **the importance of Montessori tools** to adapt or modify existing teacher evaluation systems. Participants agreed that implementation of tools, such as observation matrices from the NCMPS *Assessment Playbook*, Public Montessori in Action’s *Montessori Educator Self-Reflection Tool*, and the *MCT-EL Rubric* could be helpful adaptations to existing structures.

However, they cautioned that these should supplant existing requirements, rather than add more work. As one participant noted, “The district evaluation system is onerous enough that I’ve never asked if I can include extra information.” This theme reminds us of the importance of using tools within the Montessori community.

A third theme from this research involved the tension several participants seemed to feel between **autonomy and unity**. One participant noted, “I have had to independently seek out opportunities for myself to grow as a public Montessori teacher. It would be wonderful to be a part of a group that supports and gives feedback that improves my teaching.” Several participants noted

aptness of interview questions for my upcoming, in-depth research. However, this study presented interesting findings as a stand-alone study, suggesting some of the professional growth needs of public Montessorians – and even, more broadly, Montessorians and educators in general. I will more deeply examine public Montessori educators’ experiences with professional growth this fall, through interviews with teachers and administrators. More research is needed into the use of specific tools, such as teacher appraisal checklists and self-reflection frameworks, to adapt existing teacher evaluation structures.

Just as we, as Montessorians, incorporate the “fundamental needs” of humans into integrated lessons for el-

How can we support developmental principles beyond the fourth plane?

that, to experience professional growth, they have to take advantage of external opportunities and attend professional development sessions outside of their school or district. Multiple participants also noted that while they appreciate the flexibility and autonomy given them by their schools, they would prefer to have more of a community or network. School leaders can take note of this theme to offer teachers with support, choice, and community in pursuing their individualized professional goals.

Overall, these three takeaways offer possibilities of collaborative growth, in keeping with some Montessorians’ notion of appraisal as continuous reflection and partnership, rather than a top-down, summative grade. To aspire towards this model of collaborative appraisal, we need a mindset shift, so teachers and administrators can work in dialogue towards mutual growth. One way to nurture this dialogue is to ask open-ended questions. My district offers training in *Learning-Focused Supervision*, a framework for intentionally framing questions to promote the teacher to think more deeply and grow in the process. *Learning-Focused Supervision* and similar tools also give the administrator or coach flexibility to adopt different stances, depending on a teacher’s needs. However, beyond this, we also need to model inviting, accepting, and learning from feedback, in support of our own and our community’s development.

I designed this pilot study as a precursor to my dissertation, to assess the

ementary students, we should consider the “fundamental needs of public Montessorians” regarding professional growth as we navigate Montessori in the public sector. By uniting theory and practice, and weaving existing Montessori tools into existing structures, we can adapt public education policies and structures towards a more holistic and developmental approach for adults.

This fall, I am entering Phases Two and Three of data collection, conducting interviews and focus groups with public Montessori educators in the U.S. for a more in-depth study of their experiences with ways to support meaningful professional growth. If you are a public Montessori teacher, administrator, or coach, I would love for you to participate in this research. Please contact me at caroline.robbs@my.uwrf.edu if you would like to become involved! This study may shape future practice and policy: what schools and districts are doing this well? What could be better, and how can we learn from each other? How can we collaborate to support developmental growth – not just for our young people, but for adults, as well?

Caroline Robbins is a public Montessori school administrator in Milwaukee Public Schools and a doctoral student in Montessori Studies at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

References

- Benson, T. A., Salas, S., & Siefert, B. (2021). Irreconcilable differences: Black teachers’ lives and K-12 schools. *The Urban Review*, 53(4), 659–680.
- Bungay-Stanier, M. (2016). *The coaching habit: Say less, ask more, and change the way you lead forever*. Page Two.
- Chambers Mack, J., Johnson, A., Jones-Rincon, A., Tsatenawa, V., & Howard, K. (2019). Why do teachers leave? A comprehensive occupational health study evaluating intent-to-quit in public school teachers. *Journal of Applied Biobehavioral Research*, 24(1), e12160.
- Close, K., Amrein-Beardsley, A., & Collins, C. (2020). Putting teacher evaluation systems on the map: An overview of states’ teacher evaluation systems post-Every Student Succeeds Act. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 28(58).
- Damore, S.J., & Rieckhoff, B.S. (2021). School leader perceptions: Coaching tool and process. *Journal of Montessori Research*, 3(1).
- Even-Zahav, A., Widder, M., & Hazzan, O. (2022). From teacher professional development to teacher personal-professional growth: The case of expert STEM teachers. *Teacher Development*, 26(3), 299–316.
- Gerker, H. E. (2023). Making sense of Montessori teacher identity, Montessori pedagogy, and educational policies in public schools. *Journal of Montessori Research*, 9(1).
- Jor’dan, J.R. (2018). Predominantly Black institutions and public Montessori schools: Reclaiming the ‘genius’ in African American children. *Teaching and Learning*, 13(1), 1-7.
- Kegan, R., & Lahey, L.L. (2016). *An everyone culture: Becoming a deliberately developmental organization*. Harvard Business Review Press.
- Kegan, R., & Lahey, L. (2010). From subject to object: A constructivist-developmental approach to reflective practice. In N. Lyons (Ed.), *Handbook of reflection and reflective inquiry: Mapping a way of knowing for professional reflective inquiry* (pp. 433–449). Springer.
- Lipton, L. (2013). *Learning-focused supervision*. MiraVia.
- Madigan, D. J., & Kim, L. E. (2021). Towards an understanding of teacher attrition: A meta-analysis of burnout, job satisfaction, and teachers’ intentions to quit. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 105, 103425.
- Marx, S., Lavigne, A.L., Braden, S., Hawkman, A., Andersen, J., Gailey, S., Geddes, G., Jones, I., Si, S., & Washburn, K. (2023). “I didn’t quit. The system quit me.” Examining why teachers of color leave teaching. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 1-24.
- Minardi, K., Davidson, P., Pritzker, S., & Covert, T. (2022). *Module 1, Transforming self, community & society: Principles of effective educational leadership*. Whole School Leadership Institute.
- Murphy, T. R. N., Masterson, M., Mannix-McNamara, P., Tally, P., & McLaughlin, E. (2020). The being of a teacher: Teacher pedagogical well-being and teacher self-care. *Teachers and Teaching*, 26(7–8), 588–601.
- Murray, A.K., Daoust, C.J., Mallet, J., & Damore, S. (2021). Designing the Montessori Coaching Tool Elementary Rubric for early-career professional development. *Journal of Montessori Research*, 21(7), 25–61.
- National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector (2019). *Assessment playbook*. National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector Press.
- Pallas, A.M. (2023). The rhetoric of teacher evaluation: New York City teachers’ responses to performance labels. *Educational Policy*, 37(3), 769–799.
- Public Montessori in Action (n.d.) *Montessori Educator Self-Reflection Tool*.
- Saylor, L. L., McKenzie, G., & Sacco, C. C. (2018). Teacher-centered mentorship as meaningful professional development. *Journal of Montessori Research*, 4(2), 10–32.
- Schein, E.H., & Schein, P.A. (2021). *Humble inquiry: The gentle art of asking instead of telling* (2nd ed.). Berrett-Koehler.
- Shuls, J. V., & Flores, J. M. (2020). *Improving Teacher Retention through Support and Development*. 4(1).
- Slade, E.G. (2021). *Montessori in action: Building resilient schools*. Jossey-Bass.
- Sutcher, L., Darling-Hammond, L., & Carver-Thomas, D. (2019). Understanding teacher shortages: An analysis of teacher supply and demand in the United States. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 27(35).
- Tanner, S., McCloskey, A., & Miller, E. (2021). Destructive domains: Rethinking teacher evaluation in the age of Charlotte Danielson. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 36(9), 1876–1890.
- Taylor, P. (2020). The complexity of teacher professional growth: Unravelling threads of purpose, opportunity and response. *Professional Development in Education*, 49(1), 16–29.
- Vagi, R., Pivovarova, M., & Miedel Barnard, W. (2019). Keeping our best? A survival analysis examining a measure of preservice teacher quality and teacher attrition. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 70(2), 115–127.
- Visone, J. D., Mongillo, M. B., & Liu, Y. (2022). Teachers’ perceptions of collaboration within an evolving teacher evaluation context. *Journal of Educational Change*, 23(4), 421–450.



Celebrating 10 years of indisputable

Montessori

Thank you, community!





Indispensable public conversation

MontessoriPublic.org

Contributors!



Access for all in the Research Triangle

Continued from page 1

added Little River, an elementary program, and this year we're adding another middle school at Lucas.

Durham is a growing community—adding an average of ten people a day every day for the last ten years. Last year, the district launched Growing Together, Durham's first reassignment plan in three decades—our district's attempt to solve a lot of issues with that growth. We reconsidered all our magnet programming. We expanded Montessori because we wanted every magnet program to offer a truly different educational experience and instructional approach. Not just window dressing, not just a “theme”. You shouldn't have to go to a magnet school to get arts education or STEM—that should be available everywhere. Our community wasn't getting excited

about that kind magnet.

So we're only going to have magnet programs that offer a truly different approach, where hard research shows student benefits. And the district is majority of students of color, so we wanted research that shows that it benefits the students we primarily teach. Montessori fits that bill.

So that's where we landed: we narrowed our focus of magnet programming and we decided, based on everything our community was telling us, to expand our Montessori programs. We've expanded and added a third, much larger elementary school in a different part of the county. Little River Elementary will have twenty-seven classrooms when we're all finished—bigger than our other two elementary Montessori schools combined. The same thing with Lucas Middle School: it will

be twice the size of Lakewood Middle. We are greatly expanding the ability to pursue Montessori because of that long track record of success. We know it's something that our community values.

MP: Anything to add, Dr. Bass?

Dr. Kengie Bass: Dr. Rathbone did a great job! I'm new in the district—it will be a year next month.

MP: And before that?

KB: I was previously in Wake County Public Schools, next door in Raleigh. That's where I started my education journey. And then I left and was in higher education, and then I've circled back to K-12 here in Durham.

MP: Can either of you say more about the benefits of Montessori?

RR: Sure. There is a wonderful book that showcases a lot of that research (*Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius*, by Dr. Angeline Lillard), and the National Center has a great summary of the outcomes research on their website. And we know that a lot of the benefits are social-emotional as well as academic.

One thing that speaks to me is understanding that Maria's Montessori's work started with children that were considered “cast-offs,” if you will, at the time—developmentally disabled and high-poverty children. So the Montessori method was built that way and specifically can benefit marginalized students or students that otherwise struggle to learn. And I value the fact that we now have science to back up



Fanfare for public Montessori



Finding their place in the world...

what Maria Montessori came to understand simply by observing children and making note of what they do and what happens with them.

Them, with magnet schools, you have to make a program that's desirable. Durham is a very diverse community with high levels of education and high child poverty at the same time. We are home to Duke University of course, as well as North Carolina Central University, one of the country's largest HBCUs and the first public law school open to African American students. We have a high rate of advanced degrees, and we have students speaking 90 different languages in their homes. Montessori appeals to highly educated, progressive parents, but it also greatly benefits the other significant demographic of children we serve: students coming from very low-resourced neighborhoods or families. That makes it really powerful and a good fit for our community.

KB: For me, there are benefits that I see just going into the Montessori schools and observing. First is the hands-on learning that undergirds the entire philosophy. Students are rolling up their sleeves and really working, learning through their hands and through kin-

esthetic learning that benefits students from all ages. Then, the mixed-age classroom is a benefit in those soft skills because it allows students to build relationships with students at different ages. It allows our older students to be mentors. You learn by collaborating with others that are different from you, whether it's the age difference, or the diversity of our DPS classrooms.

And then that uninterrupted work period: It allows our students to truly get engaged in their learning and not have to turn the page. They really get to start a task and see it to its end, as opposed to the regimented traditional school setting where after 45 minutes you hear a bell and everyone grabs their things and they go on to the next thing or they go on to the next subject. Our students can develop a passion, and fall in love with what they're learning about, and they get to see it to an end.

MP: You sound like you have a good handle Montessori! Did you know about it before you came to Durham?

KB: I did not! I learned because our teachers are getting trained on this and I wanted to learn more, so I sat in through several of their training sessions. And

of course that piqued my interest so I started reading about it myself. Then you want to see it in action, and what better place than to go to any of our Montessori schools and see it, whether it be Morehead, which has been doing this since the mid 90s, or Little River, which

what's going on? How are you keeping control over that?"

But the students, once they've gotten used to it, it's self-directed, it's student-directed. They're going to their shelves, they're choosing the stuff they know they can do. They have these tasks

Our students can develop a passion, fall in love with what they're learning about, and see it to an end

started last year. Being able to see how it's working, how it's all functioning—I learned on the ground myself.

MP: You sound like a bit of a convert.

KB: Yes, I am. The traditional public education mindset is more teacher-centered or teacher-driven. Moving from just student-centered to student-led or student-driven can be tough for adults to relinquish that level of control. And then coming from an administrative lens, you know sometimes it might be difficult to say, "OK, teacher or adult in the room, how are you really measuring

and it's a well-oiled machine and it's really beautiful to see in action in a fully functioning Montessori classroom.

RR: My background is in visual arts education. And Maria Montessori indirectly is an important figure in the history of arts education because she inspired some key people to kind of build this idea of visual arts education. So I did have intentional study of her through that lens.

But my conversion process, if you will, had a lot to do with my own personal

continues on page 16 >



...and their place in the universe.

Montessori in the research triangle

Continued from page 15

struggles. I'm dyslexic, so my first times observing Montessori math lessons and understanding, for the first time, math concepts that I had always struggled with—that was an “aha!” moment for me. I thought, “Wow, if someone had taught me math this way as a child, it would have saved a whole lot of tears and heartache and pain and suffering throughout my education.” It's hard to see Montessori in action by expert practitioners and not see the value.

MP: What are some challenges you found in implementing Montessori?

KB: There's the micro level, unique to DPS, and then there's the more macro level of doing public Montessori at all. On the micro level, those parents who know about Montessori, who have that social or cultural capital, or they have the neighbors that talk to them about it, they know about Montessori. It's not even a race thing, it's a socio-economic thing. So the program is in high demand because those who know, know. And they're flooding our schools trying to get those seats. So we might not be reaching all of the students that represent a cross-section of the district.

Then there are finances. Montessori can be expensive at the start, in terms of the resources, the manipulatives, the tables and everything else. So that

that's a challenge. Our Superintendent Dr. Anthony Lewis, who came here from Lawrence, Kansas, where they have a great Montessori program, was able to mobilize funding for two adults in the classroom. It's a big deal for a Superintendent to say, “this is a priority.”

RR: Digging a little more into that, sometimes Montessori structures aren't compatible with district funding structures or state expectations. The two adults, for example, or the fact that pre-K students don't count in our state funding allotment. North Carolina doesn't allow us to have three-year-olds, so we already can't do that. And funding for 230 or so Kindergartners has to cover 456 PK-K children.

Then, we're not getting any funding for an instructional assistant. It takes the ability to access local resources. And it doesn't fit within the other funding structures such as Head Start and other Health and Human Services funding streams. So we have to charge families, using a sliding scale, to help to defray those costs and we still have to use local funding streams

Ongoing costs after that point are actually not significantly more if you can put some strategic effort into physical materials, classroom furniture and some solid resources for capacity building, modest budget. You can maintain a Montessori program with a pretty small investment of maintenance over time. We did it for 30 years with just the mod-

est resources that our district had available—we maintained two Montessori elementary schools without any outside funding. If it's done strategically, it can be a relatively small investment.

MP: For a district thinking of launching or expanding a Montessori program, what would you want them to know?

RR: You have to make sure you have to know your community. Wake County, right next door, a much larger district with similar demographics, has only ever had one public Montessori. So it's been really interesting to see the demand and interest for Montessori in our community.

Understanding your community and being prepared for a lot of parent education is key. You may need to gauge if the demand and interest is there, or build the demand and get parents to understand the model.

KB: When I think about lessons learned or things that other districts or schools should consider, you have to start with identifying what your non-negotiables are. What is part of the Montessori philosophy? What are we just not going to budge on? Folks have to realize, recognize, and understand that traditional public school isn't in complete alignment with the Montessori philosophy. There

be mindful about that in the forefront before you start anything else.

Then the training is important as well!

MP: How are you handling that?

RR: We were lucky to find the right people and the right training center.

They came in person, and brought an understanding of what that journey is for a teacher. The real value of Montessori training is it re-professionalizes a teaching force that education policy has done a lot to de-professionalize. It brings back the decision-making aspect of teaching. The teacher is carefully crafting a prepared environment, assessing each student individually and making decisions and choices.

It is truly a transformational journey for an individual, and it happens in stages and steps.

Some of these teachers had a whole range of emotions of their beloved school being changed or being challenged. We included veteran teachers in the process even if they were near retirement.

We wanted anyone who wanted to take this journey and make this transformation to do it. And people came truly from so many different places. But having trainers that really treated it as a journey, and deeply understood that transformational experience—and us as

the same experience. So that if I go to Watts, I have the same experience as I would at Little River. There's no, "Well, this Montessori school is better than hat one." We're in full implementation of our district plan, and we want to see the outcomes. We want to be doing what we



DURHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

say we're going to do and then looking at how these students are performing based on what on what we think is a very strong philosophy and pedagogical style.

MP: This all makes me wonder: Why isn't there more Montessori? What keeps other districts from adopting this great model.

RR: I suspect that for district leaders, it's a struggle to understand. It's a lot of work. It's a lot of making square pegs fit into round holes, and I'm not sure they are convinced of the return on investment.

But in this post-COVID world, we're seeing the value of social emotional development for students and those other, "non academic" aspects of child development that happen in schools. And that sense of community. And how important those are, maybe even more important than just straight up academics.

So I think it's just painting a picture of how this could be the answer. But for district leaders, the way we sometimes think in education, we're looking at all these different challenges in isolation and not always recognizing that they're all related and connected.

KB: From a district perspective, the startup costs are high and so that's a concern. But the other piece is that the Montessori philosophy is different. And it can be tough for adults to let go of some control. They're used to being in control of every aspect of it and not really trust-

ing that students are going to get from A-Z. But we know that they may zigzag, but they're going to get there and probably have a deeper understanding.

It doesn't fit into a box and it's not supposed to. And so we just need to get the word out that this is the best way to be student-centered and to create a learning environment that is rich and powerful. It's so much better! You're going to learn a lot more than what you can measure by bubbling in an A on a on a bubble sheet.

But I like it. I'm a child of the 80s, so it reminds me of *Karate Kid* you know, where Daniel Sun had to learn the karate and learn all these different pieces. And then he put it all together. And he wound up going above and beyond.

Dr. Kengie Bass is the Director of Magnet and Choice Programs Durham Public Schools in Durham, North Carolina.

Dr. Rita Rathbone is the District Magnet Specialist for Durham Public Schools.

What are your non-negotiables? What is part of the Montessori philosophy? What are we just not going to budge on?

are a lot of ways to cut corners and you end up putting the name Montessori on something, but it's not true Montessori. You need to be able to identify principles that you are 100% all in on: multi-age classrooms, uninterrupted work time, and so on.

And you definitely have to build demand with parents by telling the story of what Montessori truly is. If you don't know Montessori, you may have an incorrect idea of what you think it might be. So you have to be very dynamic with your presentation and think about how you can build that demand.

In our district it was important to plan for equity of access, building in the policies, looking at transportation, and so on. How are you going to reach all your stakeholders, all demographics, all subgroups, giving them equitable access to a Montessori education? You have to

a district having the patience to allow that to happen—I can understand why district administrators might struggle with standing back and allowing this at times messy journey to happen. But it's a complete change of who that person is as a practitioner and how they practice.

MP: What's next for Durham? You have waiting lists, you have people eager to get in. Will there be expansion?

RR: No, we have reached capacity. Lucas might be the largest Public Montessori middle school in the country once we get it fully enrolled at 700 students. So I don't think we're expanding any further. We're focused on improving what we have.

KB: Exactly, and ensuring fidelity of programming so that each school gives

montessori
NORTHWEST

Portland, OR | Bay Area, CA | Spokane, WA

DIPLOMA PROGRAMS, CERTIFICATE COURSES
& REGIONAL REFRESHER COURSES

0-3 | 3-6 | 6-12

DEGREE OPTIONS

BA | M.Ed. | Teaching Certification

WORKSHOPS & EVENTS

In-person | Online | Recorded

montessori-nw.org

An Anti-Bias Anti-Racist Training Center



MEET US *in* Milwaukee!



PUBLIC MONTESSORI CONFERENCE + RETREAT

APRIL 17-19
2026

NATIONAL CENTER for
MONTESSORI in the PUBLIC SECTOR

2026 Public Montessori
Conference and Retreat

APRIL 17-19, 2026

*By Public Montessorians
—For Public Montessorians*



Master of Education (M.Ed.) in Montessori Education

Turn Your Montessori Training into a Master's Degree

**Loyola's Credit for Prior Learning
pathway makes it possible.**

The Credit for Prior Learning pathway offers MACTE-accredited I/T, EC, EL I-II, or Admin diploma holders an opportunity to leverage their existing training toward Loyola's M.Ed. in Montessori Education.

Scan the QR
code to learn
more and apply!





LOYOLA

School of Education
UNIVERSITY MARYLAND

410-617-5020 • MONTESSORI@LOYOLA.EDU • LOYOLA.EDU/GO/MONTESSORI



MONTESSORI

Training Center Northeast



**UPCOMING
DIPLOMA COURSES**

- » 0-3 Blended Format | Bloomfield, CT | Jun. 3, 2025
- » 3-6 Blended Format | Bloomfield, CT | Jun. 5, 2025
- » 3-6 Blended Format | Bloomfield, CT | Aug. 19, 2025
- » 6- 12 Blended Format | Bloomfield, CT | Sep. 9, 2025
- » 3-6 Blended Format | Melrose, MA | May 19, 2026

Certificate Courses

- » Montessori Administrators | Blended, Bloomfield, CT | Jun. 12, 2025
- » 0-6 | Montessori Orientation Online | Sep 8, 2025*
- » 6-12 | Montessori Orientation Online | Sep 8, 2025*



**Welcoming all Montessori Teacher Credentials
Become part of our Montessori Legacy**



- » Combine Montessori teacher training with a bachelor's or master's degree
- » **NEW** All Montessori teacher credential coursework eligible for transfer: AMI, AMS, IMC + MACTE accredited
- » Study in a vibrant community of public and private Montessori Schools
- » Tuition assistance available
- » Participate in research through the Center for Montessori Studies



UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD



MONTESSORI

Training Center Northeast

mtcne.org | Hartford.edu/montessori | 860-232-1743

MontessoriPublic turns 10

Continued from page 1

published Montessori research: Dr. Angeline Lillard's 2005 *Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius* (now in its third edition, published in 2017) and a handful of small studies, many of them hampered by selection bias, small sample sizes, and questions of model fidelity.

In 2016, we covered the launch of the *Journal of Montessori Research*, the first U.S. peer-reviewed scholarly journal on the subject, later housed at the University of Kansas Center for Montessori Research (which we reported on in 2018).

In 2017 we broke news of a \$3M initiative by the Brady Education Foundation to study public Montessori specifically (and in 2020 the Foundation's pivot to focus the initiative specifically on access). Later that year we covered Lillard's groundbreaking and influential (and Brady-funded) Hartford study, using a lottery-based design to mitigate selection bias, which showed that Montessori had the power to raise achievement and reduce so-called "achievement gaps" in two Connecticut public programs.

2018 saw the publication of the largest yet Montessori study, the Riley-Furman report, which surveyed South Carolina's 45-school public Montessori program and again found positive outcomes. Later that year we covered the announcement of a \$3.3M federally-funded study under Lillard's direction, made possible because of the results in Hartford. That study, planned for a three-year span and interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, is now in press and you can be sure *MontessoriPublic* will cover it in detail in the next issue.

Research coverage continued well into the next decade, with new results from Lillard on standardized test scores, play, and well-being, findings on equity and cultural responsiveness, a global meta-analysis reporting that "Montessori education outperformed traditional education on a wide variety of academic and nonacademic outcomes," brain imaging from a laboratory in Switzerland, and much more. When someone asks, "Where's the research" we no longer have to hedge and explain—and *MontessoriPublic* is a great place to find straightforward, non-technical explanations of the latest work.

Social Justice

Another broad trend in Montessori over the last ten years has been the rise of social justice as a fundamental issue with the movement. We covered Montessori for Social Justice (MSJ) in May of 2016, months before our first printed paper came out in December that year, and we attended, and reported on the 2016 MSJ Conference in Cambridge that June as well as the 2013 origins of the group and the 1st UnConference in 2014.

Since then, we've tracked the growth of the movement up through the transcript of a "looking back" webinar in our most recent issue with the current Executive Director, Regina Dyson, and founding board member Daisy Han. Along the way, nearly every issue of the paper has featured articles on equity in Montessori.

Wildflower and Bezos

In August of 2016, we covered the development of a new model for Montessori schools: Wildflower micro-schools, the brainchild of former Google engineer Sep Kamvar. That same month, we reported on Teach for America co-CEO Matt Kramer's move to Wildflower, and we've covered their expansion and development over the years, including their expansion into the public charter world. As of 2024, Wildflower had 11 public charters in its network.

In 2018, we shared the news of Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos' billion-dollar pledge to create "a network of new, non-profit, tier-one preschools in low-income communities," and "launch and operate a network of high-quality, full-scholarship, Montessori-inspired preschools in underserved communities." Since then we've tracked the success of these Day One Academies as they have grown to at least 41 schools in six states.

Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico is home to at least 41 public Montessori schools, fourth in the nation after South Carolina, Texas, and California and the highest concentration per capita of any U.S. state or territory. *MontessoriPublic* has been covering the movement there since 2018, through hurricanes, pandemic adaptations, establishment of a *Secretariat of Montessori Education*, threats to characterize the entire system, and a bilingual update in 2024 from the *Director Educación Secundaria Montessori* at the Secretariat.

Science of Reading

Most recently, *MontessoriPublic* has tracked the revolution in public education around the Science of Reading and its impact on public Montessori schools, raising the topic in 2018 before it was national news, and continuing with beginning with two issues devoted to the topic in 2022 and 2023, featuring work from authors Susan Zoll, Laura Saylor, and Natasha Feinberg, researchers Corey Borgman and Angeline Lillard, and reports from public Montessorians in the field.

And more...

Along the way, we've reported on the growth of public programs (just under 500 in 2016 to nearly 600 today) as well as the longer history of public Montessori going back to the 1960s; the expansion of credential recognition for Montessori training (from eight states in 2016 to twelve today); pandemic adaptations in schools across the country; Indigenous Montessori connections, publications such as the Montessori

Bibliography Online, the Bloomsbury Handbook of Montessori education, and the Campbell Systematic Reviews global evaluation of Montessori; and so much more of interest to the public Montessori community and anyone interested in this model.

Where you come in

As always, we rely on you, the reader, to make this publication what it is. Elsewhere in this issue you'll find an incredible compendium of the many people who have contributed to telling this story. If we haven't heard from you, maybe now's the time! If you've been in these pages before, you know you're always welcome back. Together, let's take *MontessoriPublic* into its next decade.

David Ayer is the Director of Communications at the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector, and the Editorial Director for MontessoriPublic

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



Observing public Montessori



DAVID AYER

What the data tell us about how well Montessori is done

Before I started working at the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector, I put together and maintained a little “hobby” Montessori blog. In fact, it’s partly how I got this job. I was already writing news and information about Montessori for the internet in my spare time when NCMPS co-founder the late Jackie Cossentino asked me to come on board to revive Public School Montessorian, which you can read about elsewhere in this issue. (The lesson here: if the job you really want doesn’t exist, will it into being by just starting to do it and maybe someone will come along and start paying you.)

The blog was called *The Montessori Observer*. It’s offline right now but I’m hanging on to the domain name for a while longer in case I want to pick it back up. There was also a newsletter of the same name for a while, but that’s some-

one else, not me.

I picked that name partly because it was too good to pass up, and partly because it seemed like something the Montessori community could use: objective observation and reporting, so people who wanted to know something factual about Montessori would have a place to go, where they could follow the links and draw their own conclusions.

In 2016 I came on board with NCMPS and took on *MontessoriPublic*, which is a story for another article on page 1 of this issue. But NCMPS had another project on its hands at the time: the Montessori Census.

The Census goes back to 2012 and a group called the Montessori Leaders Collaborative, a community of leaders from national Montessori organizations convened by the Trust for Learning to help Montessori organizations find common ground and work towards common goals. Teach Montessori, a Montessori jobs board maintained by NCMPS; and the Montessori Public Policy Initiative (MPPI), the joint policy arm of the Association Montessori International/USA and the American Montessori Society, also emerged from this work.

The early data for the Census came in from mailing lists generously shared

by Montessori organizations, dogged research, and painstaking googling. It took a while to build up a credible list of schools, where they were, their funding model, and maybe, just maybe, a rough estimate of enrollment and ages served. It was much harder than we expected to get schools to update their own profiles.

search projects from the local to the national, and our numbers have been cited in *Forbes*, *EducationWeek*, and the *Washington Post*.

This year, we’ve just about cracked the code on getting schools to update their own profiles—60% of public schools have updated in the last six months,

What’s really going on in this community? Observation and data tell the story.

But over time the list got better. We focused more narrowly on public Montessori schools, because of who we are and what we care about. We do still collect and share data about the private sector, and that adds important context to our work.

We weeded out closed schools and duplicates, and did our best to distinguish the legions of “Community Montessori School” and “Montessori Children’s House” listings. We partnered with more organizations, including the International Montessori Council, Wildflower Schools, and Y Montessori. We’ve been able to share data with re-

and we’re hard at work chasing down the holdouts. **Look your school up on montessoricensus.org**—if it doesn’t look right, click that email link and we can send a simple form and get the school on a yearly schedule.

What does this have to do with observation? Well, what is the Census but an observation of the Montessori community?

What do you do when you want to know what’s going on in your classroom? You sit back and observe. And good observation means data. When you notice who’s choosing what work when and with whom—and what they’re doing when they’re not working— you start to

In the Census, we ask you for information like this:

Grade levels, staffing, and enrollment

Grade Level

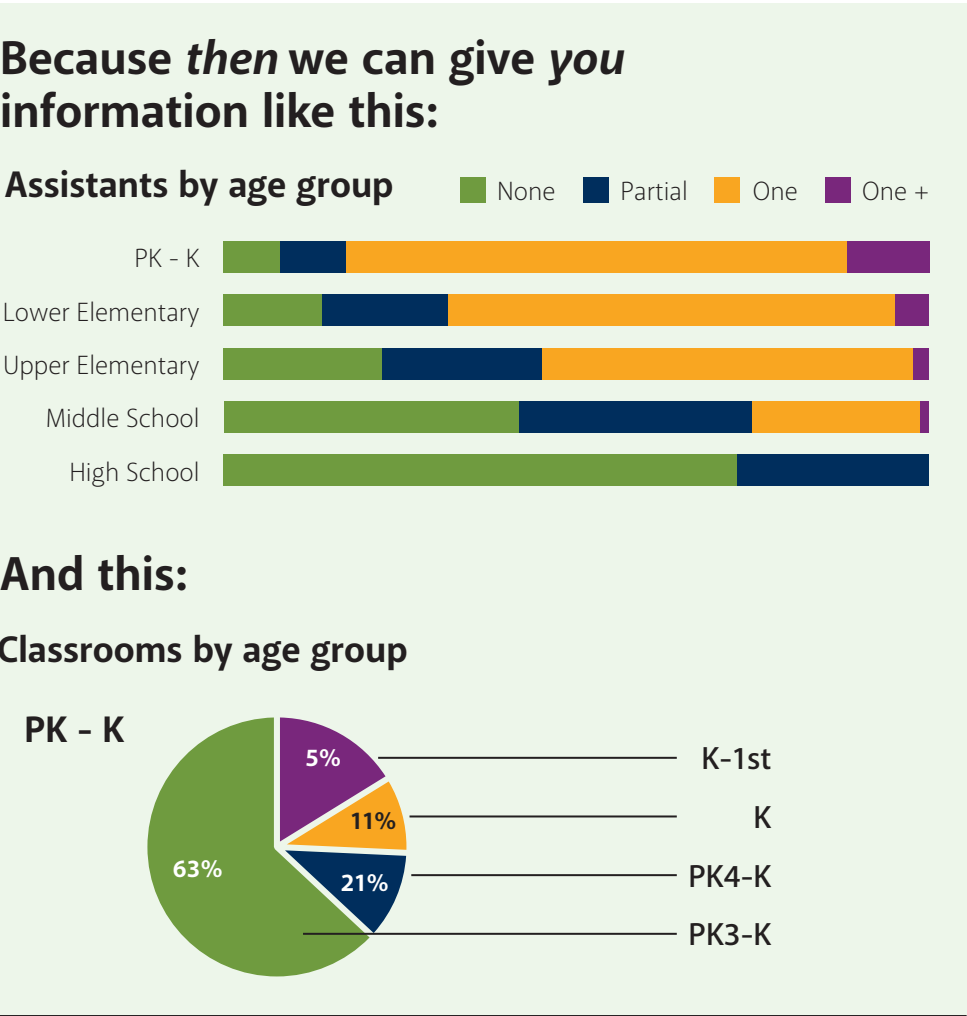
Classes

Teachers

Assistants

Children

Submit



see things. And when you start making a tally—how much practical life, how many minutes with the Stamp Game, how many trips to the snack table—now you're gathering data.

What happens when you observe and gather data? Of course, it depends on what you're looking at, but you might find things you hadn't thought about, or didn't expect, or that challenge your preconceived ideas. With this higher rate of Census participation, we have more schools than ever telling us how many children and staff they have at each level, and even how they group their mixed-age classes—information not reflected in government data. That lets us look at how Montessori is *actually practiced* in the public sector.

Age groups

Montessori calls for three-year age groupings along developmental lines: ages three to six, six to nine, nine to twelve, and so on. But those age groups don't line up with conventional education models or public funding streams. With public funding often starting at four or even five years old, how many schools can offer a true Children's House? Under conventional grade groupings, how many schools provide full 1st-3rd or 4th-6th grade elementary classrooms? Now we're in position to begin answering these questions.

The charts here show the percentage of classrooms using each configuration. Encouragingly, for PK-K, 63% of class-

rooms manage to enroll a full three-year age span, and another 21% start at four years old. Lower Elementary classrooms are almost exclusively 1st-3rd. The model breaks up more at Upper Elementary: just over half of classrooms serve the full 4th-6th grade age span. 22% of Upper Elementaries use a 4th-5th model, presumably transitioning to middle school at 6th grade.

At middle school, more than half of programs serve two years in 7th-8th grade. Another 38% serve three years but begin at 6th and extend through 8th grades. Only eight classrooms in our sample reported a 7th-9th grade program. Unsurprisingly given this structure, just three schools group high school as 10th-12th, with the remaining 60 programs following a traditional 9th-12th grade model. All of these findings suggest opportunities for further research on the character and effectiveness of various structures.

Staffing

The base staffing model for Montessori classrooms through 6th grade is one teacher supported by one (or more) assistants or paraprofessionals. The base model in conventional school is one teacher, period. How many schools are able to staff classrooms with an additional adult to support full implementation?

We ask schools to report staffing by grade level, giving the number of classrooms, teachers, assistants, and chil-

dren at each level. Then, we can calculate ratios for those levels. We can see that most schools (70%) that offer PK-K provide an assistant. This drops off predictably in the higher grades, with nearly half of upper elementary classrooms getting by with partial support or none at all. Middle and high school continue the trend, although at these levels a team teaching approach is more prevalent and assistants may represent teachers for special subjects.

What's next?

We would love to get to 100% of schools filling in their profiles, so we don't have to guess and extrapolate. And we're excited to dig deeper into how schools operate. Who is using supplemental curriculum? How do outcomes correlate with staffing and enrollment models? In the big picture, how can we use data to improve practice, just as we should in classrooms and schools? **You can help.** Visit the Census at montessoricensus.org and let us know what we're missing.

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

Blended Format
AMI Diploma
3-6 & 6-12

Online
X
Onsite

*in
Nashville!*



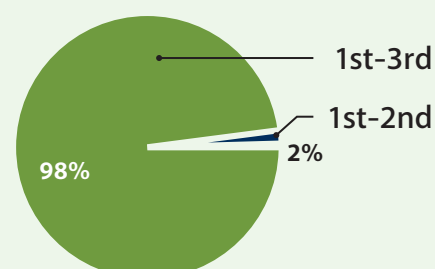
montessori-mint.org

2026

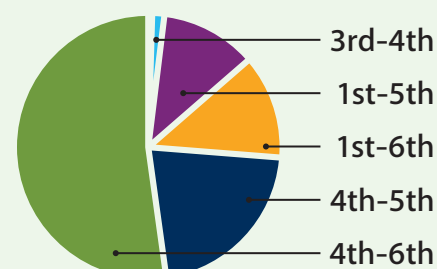
And this:

Classrooms by age group

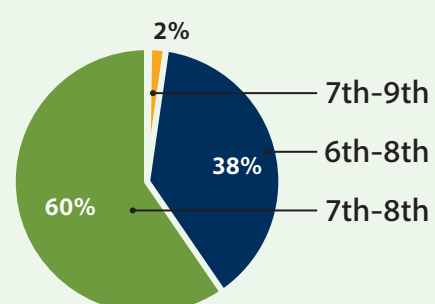
Lower Elementary



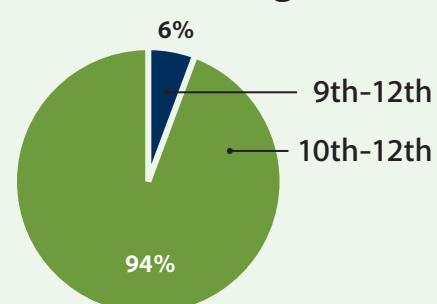
Upper Elementary



Middle School



High School



Leadership training... Montessori style

CGMS offers school leadership training that is lifestyle-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



Public School Montessorian is now *MontessoriPublic*

NCMPS picks up where Denny Schapiro left off



DAVID AYER

This article is reprinted from Volume One, Number One of MontessoriPublic, January 2016.

28 years ago, when the late Denny Schapiro launched *Public School Montessorian*, “the Montessori community newspaper”, the public Montessori landscape was very different. Today’s Montessori Census — the best data we have on the movement — shows just 30 public programs going that far back. Milwaukee Public Schools had just three of its ten current programs. Arlington, Virginia had four of eleven. Texas had two of what has grown to more than 30.

From our very first issue 10 years ago ...

But in 1988, Schapiro saw an unmet need. At that time, working in public Montessori was “hard, lonely work,” in the words of Mark Anderson, a longtime contributor to the newspaper. Those 30 schools were spread across 19 states, with ten of them the only school in their state. Within the public system, those teachers and leaders were strangers in a strange land, often misunderstood and deprecated by their conventional education colleagues. Even within the movement, public Montessori was at times regarded with suspicion, and seen by some as compromised or watered down. National Montessori organizations (for complicated institutional and political reasons) were slow to throw their full support behind public Montessori.

Schapiro had been a journalist, public school teacher, and education professor, and his children attended a public Montessori school in Minneapolis, where he learned first-hand about the challenges of public Montessori. He

knew other similar schools around the country were facing the same problems, and he launched *Public School Montessorian* to connect with them, share information and resources, and work together to find solutions. As it turned out, there was a market for this connection, and as the public Montessori movement grew, *Public School Montessorian* grew with it.

Schapiro was not just a reporter, but an advocate as well. He gathered and shared data on the schools he covered — How did their test scores compare? How did they pay for Montessori materials? How did they balance Montessori curriculum and teacher training with state requirements? How were they keeping up enrollment? He built a database that fed directly into the 2014 Montessori Census project, which continues to gather national data. He went to national events for organizations large and small, and (by one account) set up *Public School Montessorian* with the movement’s first toll-free 800 number.

The newspaper grew and thrived, and reached far beyond the public school world, living up to its tagline as “the Montessori community newspaper”. Many Montessorians first encountered it in private schools thanks to Schapiro’s tireless distribution. The paper hosted writers from across the Montessori spectrum, notably including the late AMS Lifetime Achievement Award recipient Lakshmi Kripalani and veteran AMI Elementary Guide and author John Snyder. When Schapiro passed away in 2014, he left a space that no one individual could fill, and the newspaper ran its last issue.

At the beginning of Schapiro’s work, there was no national organization focused on public Montessori, and that remained true through several decades. But in 2012, the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector launched, and in 2014 the organization was in a position to consider taking on the publication. Conversations with Schapiro’s family ensued, and an agreement was reached to relaunch the newspaper in digital form, with the resources of an institution behind it. In April 2016, *Public School Montessorian* was reborn as *MontessoriPublic*, with a website, Facebook page, email newsletter, and even a Twitter feed. It’s come a long way from a print newspaper and an 800 number.



The cover of the very first issue, 2016

MontessoriPublic picks up where *Public School Montessorian* left off. We run in-depth public school profiles for schools as small as Alder Montessori in Portland and as large and well-established as Tobin Montessori School in Cambridge. We highlight the current explosion of Montessori research, including the newly launched Journal of Montessori Research and the massive Furman study in South Carolina. We cover the changes in challenges in public Montessori, such as the emerging Montessori for Social Justice movement. We explore the frontiers of Montessori for the public, with stories on tuition-based, access-oriented programs across the country, Montessori in a program for developmentally disabled children at the Penfield Academy in Milwaukee, and Montessori for the homeless in two centers in South Bend and St. Paul. *Public School Montessorian*’s Field Notes are now State Updates, sharing the news of new programs large and small as it

happens. The website, Facebook page, and Twitter feed allow us to bring our readers Montessori public news and developments as they happen, on laptops, tablets, and smartphones.

And now, we’ve come full circle with this Print Edition. To be honest, we weren’t sure a print edition even made sense anymore. Does anyone read print anymore? But maybe Montessorians do! There’s something about the concrete, the sensorial, about holding it in your hands and flipping through the pages, that we like the feel of. We’re not entirely sure how this will turn out, or if it makes sense to do it again after this issue. So that’s where you come in. If you like what you’re reading and how you’re reading it, drop us a line, at info@montessoripublic.org. Join the dialogue, and share your voice. Let’s bring Montessori into the public conversation.

David Ayer was the Editorial Director for MontessoriPublic

Tell us your story

MONTESSORI public

What will the next ten years look like?

In this issue, we looked at back at the last ten years of the public Montessori movement. The research explosion, social justice, new models such as Wildflower and Bezos Day One Academies, the Puerto Rico story, and the science of reading—who could have predicted these developments ten years ago?

But we can always try! What will the next ten years of public Montessori bring? What challenges do we face, and what innovations and re-commitments will we bring to meet them? Send us your predictions, your speculations, your wishes, hopes, and dreams!

Editorial policy: We welcome contributions, perspectives, and experiences of contributors from the full range of racial, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, gender, ability, and economic backgrounds.

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 Summer 2026 issue is **March 31, 2026**, but we would love to get started working with you now—that gives us plenty of time to work together in the editing process.

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. “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 not. We want to keep this publication free to the community. Ad revenue covers printing and mailing costs, which means we don't have a budget to pay writers at this time. We appreciate and thank you for adding your work and voice to this effort.

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

The public calendar

November 7	New Jersey Montessori Association Annual Conference PINES MANOR, NJ
November 8	Barrie Institute for Advanced Montessori Studies GREATER WASHINGTON MONTESSORI CONFERENCE SILVER SPRINGS, MD
November 8	Michigan Montessori Society Fall Conference ANN ARBOR, MI
November 14-15	Wisconsin Montessori Association Conference WAUSAU, WI
November 17-18	Keres Children's Learning Center/ Indigenous Montessori Institute 9TH ANNUAL NATIVE LANGUAGE SYMPOSIUM ALBUQUERQUE, NM

2026

January 10	Montessori Schools of Massachusetts Annual Conference FRANKLIN MA
January 17	University of Wisconsin-River Falls RIVER FALLS, WI
January 23-24	Utah Montessori Council Conference SALT LAKE CITY, UT
February 13-15	AMI-USA 2026 Montessori Experience: Refresher Courses and More! SAN DIEGO, CA
February 13-15	AMI Elementary Alumni Association Advanced Studies Conference SAN DIEGO, CA
February 20-21	Association of Illinois Montessori Schools 2026 Conference LISLE, IL
February 27-March 1	Montessori Educational Programs International WRIGHTSVILLE BEACH, NC
February 28	Cincinnati Montessori Society COVINGTON, KY
March 19-22	American Montessori Society The Montessori Event WASHINGTON, DC
April 17-19	National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector Conference and Retreat MILWAUKEE, WI
May 1-4	Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) 30TH INTERNATIONAL MONTESSORI CONGRESS YUCATAN, MEXICO



POSTCARD



SCAN HERE FOR
UPCOMING TOURS



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.



montessoritoursandtravel@gmail.com

**Montessori
Tours and Travel**
your window to
the world -
and Montessori



98% in Stock Guarantee! or FREE backordered item

Our Montessori inventory is now 98% in stock, ready to ship immediately!
If you experience any back ordered item, you will get that item for FREE! *

- GreenGuard Gold Certification for LEED credits
- Leader in Early Childhood Classroom Furniture
- Trusted by major universities' early learning centers
- Meets US and European Safety Standards
- Member of US Green Building Council & CHPS
- Patented safety features

montessori[®] outlet[®]
premium quality at outlet price

- Authentic Blueprints Based on AMI & AMS Standards
- Compatible with Nienhuis materials
- Up to 70% off Nienhuis Montessori
- Satisfies Federal CPSIA HR4040 Safety Standards
- Satisfies USA ASTM-F963 Toy Safety Standards
- Satisfies European EN-71 Toy Safety Standards

• FSC & PEFC certified lumber (green products) • Water based non-toxic finish (lead free) • Tested by CPSC approved German TUV Lab



www.montessorionoutlet.com

888.668.8538

*Please check www.montessorionoutlet.com for details