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Finding my way in public Montessori

There's more than one way to meet each child's needs

BY **GENEVIEVE D'CRUZ**

Children finding their way at Lee Montessori Public Charter School

I came to Montessori training through a whirlwind of life changes. After college, I immediately moved from North Carolina to Atlanta, Georgia, to work for Teach for America. I knew I wanted to do Montessori training eventually, through working summers at a language immersion Montessori school in North Carolina. However, the pressures placed on millennials today to "discover their passions" and "find their way" are higher than ever. I became enamored with the idea of a plan and system that was already created for me. What's the harm, I thought, in getting a few years of experience and then going to training?

I knew I was interested in AMI Primary training, and the international diploma appealed to me (I had even visited the training center in Buenos Aires, Argentina and considered training abroad). The beautiful problem about Montessori education is that once you've had exposure to it, nothing else can compare. I knew after a few weeks into August that I wouldn't be able to spend the next two years working at a conventional school, knowing that there was a more balanced, holistic, and child-centered approach that existed.

It was sheer luck that there was an AMI training center just outside Atlanta. I found myself on the phone with the trainer, Joen Bettmann, to discuss the training and my background. She told me to rush my recommendations and come in that week to meet with her. "I promise I'm not crazy," I reassured her, over and over again. I quit my job, picked up my final paycheck, and went into the training center the very next day. I spent the following week reading The Absorbent Mind, purchasing books and supplies, and began training.

The beginning of training was like the beginning of any new school year or class. Nobody in our cohort knew each other, and we were uncertain about what to expect. After some orientation to the space, policies, and structure of the training, we jumped right in.

None of us expected how detail-oriented the training would be. After being presented hand-washing, we discussed the process, and were all taken aback at how specific we needed to be. Which hand did what? With what grip? In what way? How do you bring the clean water? Where do you put the used water? How? The first few weeks required a sort of "switching over" of the mind to a particular attention to our movements and language. I am fortunate enough to be a detail-oriented thinker, which served me well in the training, but training still required us to think in ways we may not have otherwise considered.

Training also required us all to find the most efficient way as possible to use our time. Between class all day, required practice time with the materials, and the actual writing of the albums, finding a way to balance life was tricky. By spring, as we scrambled to finish papers and presentation write-ups before exams, every spare moment became an opportunity to accomplish some work: an edit on an existing paper, a note at the bottom of a write-up, or ten more minutes of practice time.

After speaking with other AMI graduates over the past few years, I've gathered that aspect most lacking from the training has been skills and techniques for systems and management: the

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actual meat of how to guide a smooth, structured, and balanced community. Fortunately, I've had a supervisor who was a guide herself, as well as access to a few seasoned guides, but if I hadn't had this, the public sector exploration would have been extremely difficult.

Opening a school with a community of 21 children (only two of whom had Montessori experience) required a speedy and thorough creation of systems to provide predictable and safe physical and psychological limits. The AMI training is thorough and traditional, two of my favorite aspects, but fitting all the content into one year (to make it accessible to trainees, financially and temporally) does not allow for much time spent on management. Of course, it is important for new guides to find their own styles, for practical reasons as well as for ownership and empowerment, but some universal management ideas and training might also be helpful to new graduates.

My training did offer a day of discussion and ideas around beginning a new community, ideas for re-engagement, and joining an existing community. For the sake of time, my trainer would categorize some questions as management (or "art of teaching") questions, and she did offer a lecture/discussion series on this topic to guides in the community. Luckily for guides in other areas, I've heard of similar groups that have begun to provide support to both new and seasoned guides. Perhaps the lack of time spent on management in the formal training can and should be made up for by the surrounding Montessori community, if schools are fortunate enough to have one.

There were some implicit preparations embedded in my experience. The thorough preparation became second nature when I began guiding because analysis of movement and attention to detail was expected throughout the training. Time to practice with materials without the children was essential to becoming acquainted with them without the added pressures of a child-filled environment. Though some moments of training seemed hectic and stressful, the skill of making time, working efficiently, and not wasting a single moment, was also built into my work habits. This was immensely important as there is never a shortage of tasks and work to be done in a public Montessori school.

There is never a shortage of work to be done in a public Montessori school

Perhaps the most significant part of my training was embracing the Montessori approach for each individual child, while knowing that it can look different for different children. A response to our frequent "what if" questions was that seeing "*a* way" of doing things was more helpful than being stuck on "*the* way." One of our classmates arranged a vase of flowers using only stems one day. It was so well-received that it stuck with me as an example of the capacity for creativity humans have when given space to be themselves within necessary limits. Our trainer told us a story of a child who had gone around the line using his nose instead of walking on it. She simply responded that that was "*a* way" to arrange the flowers, "*a* way" to experience movement on the line. Immersing ourselves in the details required of the primary training, we always wanted the "right" answer to our questions for our albums and own knowledge. To our frustration, we were often just told, "that's '*a* way' to do it."

This drove us crazy during the training, but it resulted in a more balanced and less constrained point of view when I began guiding. As in most schools (public schools in particular), I had children and families with a wide array of needs; thanks to the introduction of "*a* way" into my thought process, I did not feel bound to a *particular* way. I was less reluctant to make needed accommodations for children. In my first year, it seemed I needed to make accommodations left and right, but due to my preparation, I was able to get to the direct aim of a material while still serving the child's individual needs. A combination of this outside-the-box, flexible, thinking paired with the thorough training (in theory and materials) is essential in order to both stay true to the fidelity of the training and follow every child.

Genevieve D'Cruz, M.Ed., is a guide at Lee Montessori Public Charter School in Washington, DC. She was a member of the founding staff at Lee and holds an AMI Primary diploma.

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Teacher residency: A key piece of the puzzle

Building a viable teacher pipeline for public Montessori schools

BY **NCMPS STAFF**

LUMIR residents in Memphis in supervised practice

Public Montessori is the growth sector for the Montessori movement. Precise numbers are hard to come by, although the NCMPS Montessori Census is working to change that—see p. 16 for more information. Still, new schools serving at least 2,000 children have opened in the last two years, and that number will surely be revised upward as new data come in. It stands to reason: there's a limit to how much of the mature tuition-paying market private Montessori schools can corner. But the public sector is still widely underserved, while families and policy-makers are realizing the appeal of a developmentally based model focused on human flourishing. Recent broad scale market research commissioned by the Trust for Learning and shared across the early childhood education community confirms that:

What we've learned is that finding and keeping well prepared adults is big work, and it requires a multi-pronged strategy

Parents wish their children to develop into strong, capable and morally responsible individuals, who are lifelong learners and doers, through a partnership with teachers in achieving this goal.

Needless to say, Montessori matches that description. As families and school leaders alike push back against a narrow, test-driven approach to education, Montessori is well positioned to extend its reach.

But (as you will read throughout this issue) public Montessori faces challenges, and school after school has told us that their greatest challenge is staffing: Not just finding teachers who have both state and Montessori credentials (see page 6), but supporting them through the struggles common to many public school teachers, and keeping them in the classroom. Teachers are scarce to begin with for two reasons. First, additional training for both credentials is costly and time-consuming. Second, high-quality Montessori training that prepares teachers for public practice is itself scarce, and leaving home and work for a nine months or multiple summers is a non-starter for many prospective teachers. Equity and representation are pressing concerns as well: If teachers have to leave their communities to go to training, they will either not get trained or we will continue to have a teaching force made of largely of middle class white women, which is not appropriate for schools serving populations that are not white and middle class.

Even in places with access to training, ideal conditions—such as fully prepared classrooms, full age groups beginning at age three, families who embrace the Montessori approach, leaders equipped to support high-fidelity practice, and children only occasionally affected by the challenges of income and food insecurity, learning differences, and systemic racism—are few and far between in the public schools that need Montessori the most.

So public Montessori schools that do find trained teachers report report significant levels of turnover, as do traditional programs. In Montessori schools, which rely on the continuity that comes with three-year cycles

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and cohesive classroom communities, this churn is disastrous. In addition to the challenges of recruiting, hiring and orienting new teachers, constant changes in staffing means discontinuity for children, and, too many classrooms staffed by adults who are not properly prepared to deliver Montessori. Without more access to better teacher preparation, public Montessori can't grow as fast or be as effective as it should.

The children can't always wait for the teacher to be ready

At NCMPS, we've not only been tracking these challenges since before the organization was founded in 2012, we've been experimenting with solutions. What we've learned is that finding and keeping well prepared adults is big work, and it requires a multi-pronged strategy. In addition to launching projects such as Teach Montessori (Teach-Montessori.org), which aims to expand the pool of potential Montessori teachers, and the Montessori Surround, a suite of courses addressing skills and knowledge critical to success in public schools, we've come to believe that the entire process of teacher formation needs to be substantially reconsidered. Our approach is the Montessori Teacher Residency (MTR).

While the concept of teacher residency is not original to us, the application to Montessori training is novel. (At the same time, NCMPS does not imagine itself as the sole or even principal implementer of this model. Existing Montessori training organizations could incorporate this structure into their offerings without compromising authenticity.) The MTR is a practice-based, school-wide approach to professional formation. It combines three elements: Montessori training, additional courses needed for success in public schools, and a school culture built around continuous improvement. This model addresses both supporting legs of the "Montessori triangle", preparing the adult and the environment for the child they will serve.

On paper, that sounds simple. In practice, however, as work in the field has shown, turning schools into laboratories for professional formation is complex. Yet, what we've learned has only strengthened our belief that the relationship between Montessori training and real school practice is the most important element of a sustainable model of teacher preparation.

Why residency?

Developing our model, we first looked outside Montessori to an approach that began in cities such as Boston, Denver, and Chicago in the late 1990s. Inspired by medical training, urban teacher residencies provide practice-based training in real schools with real students, supported by experienced mentors. Most urban residencies are 15-month programs—two summers of coursework bookending a school year in which a resident works in a partner school. At the end of the process, the resident earns a state teaching certificate, a master's degree, and, in some cases, additional certification in Special Education or ELL.

These programs have aimed to prepare more novice teachers to succeed in classrooms characterized by high rates of poverty and special needs—challenges that, in addition to excessive testing, often drive teachers out of the profession. The most striking result of teacher residencies across the nation has been better teacher retention, which makes sense, given their emphasis on extended, supervised apprenticeship.

Several elements of the Montessori approach make the residency model a good fit. Montessori training entails mastering a large and subtle repertoire, which requires lots of practice. While most Montessori training programs include extended opportunities for "supervised practice" in prepared environments, confidence in the core skills of Montessori practice takes several years beyond training.

In addition, on-the-job training has been integral to Montessori teacher preparation since the beginning. In independent (and a few public) Montessori schools, new teachers have often started out as classroom assistants. Some newly trained teachers even

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choose to begin their classroom careers as assistants before taking on a lead role. In the best cases, teachers who are either in training or newly trained have several years to practice with the support of more experienced peers.

This type of extended apprenticeship is clearly ideal. It's also extremely rare in public schools. In fact, the need for new teachers is so acute and budgets for staffing so tight that we more often find a vicious cycle of underprepared adults who do their best but fail to succeed in high-need settings. Failure and frustration drives them out of the profession, new novice teachers come in, and the cycle repeats.

Breaking that cycle requires not just a re-imagined approach to training, but a more active, affirmative role for schools. In our model, residency is not just about the trainee or prospective teacher: it's about the whole school. The school must cultivate a community of practice within which everyone, but especially novices, can grow. By growth, we mean strengthening Montessori practice for the children and families who are served by the school.

Training: necessary but not sufficient

In nearly a decade of studying the challenge of the Montessori teacher pipeline, we've learned two key lessons. Great public Montessori requires great training. And, great training is not enough. Great public Montessori teachers must be able to deploy the knowledge and skills they learn through training in a manner that is flexible, personalized, and sensitive to the goals of equity, inclusion, and the dignity of all children and families. They must be, like all Montessori teachers, experts on human development, environment preparation, and lesson presentation. Great public Montessori school teachers must also understand the cultural, social and regulatory environment of public schools in order to help themselves and their communities to serve all students, meeting external expectations while holding themselves accountable to the higher standards of curiosity, perseverance, creativity and compassion.

Helping all members of the school community understand what this means requires substantial investments in both structures and cultures that allow Montessori practitioners to examine their practice honestly, openly, and with a constant eye to core goal of the approach: realizing the human potential of every member of the community.

Even in places with access to training, ideal conditions are few and far between in the public schools that need Montessori the most

From training to formation: getting proximate

Bryan Stevenson, one of our heroes, tells us that to be agents of change, we must "get proximate," meaning get closer to the issues and circumstances we are trying to affect. And while there are many discrete elements of the teacher preparation process that need to change in order to better serve the public sector, the overall goal of getting proximate captures the most important principle guiding the Montessori Teacher Residency.

In some communities, proximity means training centers that are geographically close to schools. Where that exists, we find the strongest teacher pipelines are built collaboratively between schools and training centers. This means the training center becomes much more than a producer of new teachers. Rather, a school (or group of schools) and center work together to support the deepening of Montessori practice for all members of the schools' communities. This is our model in Washington, DC, with the DC Montessori Teacher Residency (page 3). Training centers aiming to support teacher formation beyond pre-service have begun to offer events such as professional development workshops, targeted lectures or programs, and informal gatherings for teachers and prospective teachers. The more Montessori and public-sector expertise interact, the better for the well-being of the public school.

In other communities, proximity means bringing training to the school, as we did in partnership with Libertas School of Memphis. Libertas Urban Montessori Institute and Residency (LUMIR) responded to the need for rigorously and relevantly prepared adults who are members of the community they serve by creating a training course embedded in the school itself.

Along with physical proximity, LUMIR also blurs the line between pre-service training and ongoing professional development. By situating the course inside the school, and by instituting structural elements such as ongoing coaching, lesson study, and child study, experienced Libertas teachers play an active role in supporting the LUMIR novices. Likewise, the novices, who spend their summers in a practice room prepared for pre-service

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training, are fully integrated into the fabric of school. They are learning on-the-job, both from their students and from their peers.

The experience of training, in other words, is not bounded by place or cohort or even time. Rather, because LUMIR novices are in constant contact with one another and with their more experienced peers, formation is continuous.

It's important to note that LUMIR is completing its first courses this year, and is still in the pilot phase of implementation. That means we're still making sense of the design and outcomes of the program in order to derive usable lessons for the wider public Montessori community. While we're extremely encouraged by the results for the residents who are completing the program while leading classrooms, we still have questions, and it would be a mistake to attempt to replicate this program without further consideration.

We don't, for instance, recommend that every public Montessori school start its own training center. As tempting as that can sound to schools struggling to find or afford appropriate training, the logistical and pedagogical challenges of supporting what amounts to an entirely additional business threaten to deplete rather than support the overall mission of the school. Likewise, while we were able to recruit and support a team of experienced public Montessori practitioners to serve as instructors for the courses, we are deeply respectful of the years of study, mentoring, and self-reflection that go into developing the theoretical and practical expertise that distinguishes trainers from teachers. We urge caution in staffing residencies. Even more, we acknowledge that building a viable infrastructure to prepare and sustain people who support teacher development across the career trajectory remains a major challenge associated with building a viable Montessori teacher pipeline.

Bryan Stevenson tells us that to be agents of change, we must "get proximate"

We can, however, share promising insights drawn from our work with LUMIR, the DC Teacher Residency, and other programs.

Proximity: Bringing teacher formation into the school is key not just to finding and keeping great teachers, but to strengthening the entire school's capacity to realize its mission. Residencies help schools build and maintain a staff of knowledgeable, skillful, sensitive teachers, by putting professional formation and continuous improvement at the center of staff development.

At the same time, every school can't start its own training center. But schools can support "practice rooms"—spaces prepared for adults to hone their practice—as well as other structures in space and time, which could play a part in training while supporting continuous reflective practice.

Expertise: Montessori practice is complex, detailed, and distinguished from other approaches by its coherence between theory and practice. At its best, Montessori is supremely responsive to the needs and interests of all learners. At its worst, it can show an unruly mix of rigidity, disorder, and exclusionary behavior. Achieving well-functioning Montessori practice requires deep and wide investments in Montessori expertise. Residencies need strong links between schools and centers of deep Montessori knowledge.

Equity: If public Montessori schools are to serve diverse populations of students well, their staffing must reflect the communities they serve. Residencies can attract and retain a much more diverse teaching force, by offering formation programs which are accessible, affordable, and appropriate to a much wider swath of the potential universe of Montessori teachers.

Our work with Montessori Teacher Residency is just beginning, and we continue to learn from our successes, our struggles, our explorations, and even paths which turn out to be blind alleys. But we are confident that Residency plays a key role in extending the reach of high quality public Montessori to many more families.

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The DC teacher residency

A pilot program to support emerging teachers from diverse backgrounds

BY **KATIE BROWN**

In 1988, the predecessor to this publication, *Public School Montessorian*, published its inaugural issue. The headline on the front page of this very first issue reads, "The Teacher Shortage: Problem Persists, but Districts Respond with a Variety of Approaches." Thirty years later, the teacher pipeline continues to be one of the most pressing issues facing public Montessori schools.

Finding trained candidates to fill lead teacher positions is a much-discussed challenge. Several articles in this issue of *MontessoriPublic* take on aspects of this challenge and highlight common issues. In many places, these folks need to have both Montessori training and a state teaching certification to be qualified. Furthermore, the Montessori teaching force, like the general teacher population in the U.S., is predominately white and female, making it difficult for schools to recruit teachers who reflect the diverse communities they often serve.

Compounding this supply problem is the issue of churn. The reality of teaching in high-need public school settings can be a rude awakening to new teachers who may have developed an idealized notion of the Montessori classroom in their training. For many schools, finding qualified teacher candidates is only the beginning; what ensues is often a struggle to support and retain these teachers as they come to terms with the demands of doing Montessori in the public sector. While Montessori teacher training is an exquisite model of instilling high-quality pedagogy, it is often insufficient for success in high-need public schools. The Montessori movement in the U.S. has historically been dominated by independent schools; even today, it is estimated that public schools comprise only about 10% of the total number of Montessori schools nationwide. In this context, it is not surprising that many Montessori training programs are oriented toward service in independent schools, where issues like special education, serving English language learners, and serving students exposed to trauma may be less pronounced. As a result, public Montessori schools face turnover among teachers who are not adequately prepared for service in the public sector.

Public classrooms can be a rude awakening to new teachers with an idealized notion of the Montessori classroom

Last year, the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector piloted a model of school-based professional formation for public Montessori teachers in Washington, DC. This program, the DC Montessori Teacher Residency (DCMTR), aims to provide novice and aspiring public Montessori teachers with the skills and dispositions they need to be successful in the public sector, while also diversifying the teacher pipeline. Participating schools nominate lead teachers who are fresh out of training, as well as classroom assistants who are being groomed for training and lead teacher positions, to be enrolled as residents. Although the pool of trained Montessori teachers is, indeed, predominately white, classroom assistants are more likely than lead teachers to be people of color and to be pulled from the surrounding community. By encouraging schools to look to their classroom assistants as a way to "build their bench," and explicitly incentivizing schools to nominate people of color as residents, we hope to help schools create faculty that are more representative of the District, which is majority-minority.

As a cohort, these residents participate in a series of hybrid courses on neurodevelopment, serving diverse learners, and language and literacy. These three course strands, known collectively as the Surround, are delivered as two-week modules focusing on topics like family engagement, self-regulation, and race and equity. While we believe that educators in both public and private settings can benefit from support and professional development in these areas, we know that this skill set is essential for Montessorians to effectively serve all children in the public sector. Residents participate in online discussions around shared readings, videos, and podcasts. They apply their

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learning to their work in their classrooms via job-embedded tasks like observations, case studies, and student action plans. In an exciting new partnership with Whitworth University, these courses will be available for graduate-level credit in 2018-2019. Though teachers in DC charter schools are not required to have a state teaching licenses, the hope is that eventually, these courses can provide a path to state certification for Montessori teachers.

One substantial difference between the DCMTR and traditional teacher residencies is that the unit of service for the DCMTR is the school rather than the individual resident. At the same time that residents are supported through the Surround, the whole school is supported in developing a culture of continuous improvement and professional growth. This component, dubbed Culture, entails monthly schoolwide professional development, collaboration and coaching with an NCMPS Montessori coach, and support for implementing protocols like Lesson Study and Child Study. At the same time that residents are developing the skills and dispositions that will help them meet the varying needs of the children in their classrooms, the whole faculty is elevating their practice through ongoing professional development, continuing refinement of lesson presentations (Lesson Study), and collaborative intervention and progress monitoring for children experiencing challenges (Child Study). In this way, the effects of the DCMTR ripple through the entire school community.

Bringing order and structure to a complex set of puzzle pieces

Currently in its second year, the DCMTR has designed Surround and Culture to wrap around the Montessori training experience; however, the program has not actually included Montessori training. That is set to change in 2018-2019. In January of this year, NCMPS was awarded a Scholarships for Opportunity and Results (SOAR) grant from the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education. The SOAR program is designed to increase the quality of DC charter schools by providing funds for teacher preparation for these schools. Thanks to these grant funds, residents from DC Montessori charter schools will be able to access Montessori training at a substantially reduced cost as part of the 2018-2019 DCMTR.

These issues are not unique to Montessori; traditional teacher preparation programs are also grappling with how to prepare teacher candidates for the demands of service in high-need public schools, and urban schools generally face high levels of teacher turnover. We hope, however, that the DCMTR will provide a model for a solution that is.

Katie Brown is the DC Regional Coordinator for the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector.

Look to classroom assistants as a way to "build your bench," and nominate people of color as residents to create more representative faculty

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Training for public school teachers

A new spin on traditional models for greater impact and service

BY **KATHRYN PICANCO**

Montessori Northwest's elementary teacher summer training in Spokane, Washington, is piloting an innovative Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) Elementary teacher training program designed to work with public school teachers, especially those currently in the classroom. This training offers several unique features:

- Three summer format of six-seven weeks each summer allowing time for transition out of and back into the classroom
- Supplemental lectures and support provided online during the academic year
- Master's in Education from Whitworth University in conjunction with the training with specially designed classes for Montessori practitioners developed and taught by the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector (NCMPS)
- One semester of extended practice teaching to earn Washington State teacher certification

Elise Huneke-Stone, Director of Elementary Training, writes enthusiastically about the prospect of this new training model.

> *Partnering with Whitworth and NCMPS enables our students to access the services and support of two institutions with qualified, gifted staff who share our vision of bringing more Montessori education to more children and enable the Montessori Northwest staff to focus on the AMI course. Although our summers are slightly shorter than the typical AMI summer course, we still meet all the AMI requirements for face-to-face hours, supervised practice, observation, and practice teaching. In the partnership with Whitworth, students can work on their albums and material making during the interim years, with regular check-ins and supervision, and review of student work by the trainers.*

The distance learning component is an enhancement, not a replacement, of the AMI course content

> *The distance learning component of the course is an enhancement, not a replacement, of the AMI course content. These partnerships will result in a more coherent, positive experience for the course students, and in a training that is much more integrated into their professional lives.*

The development of the new training center and model evolved from continual efforts of and relationships between the local, regional and national AMI community to sustain and grow Montessori programs across the country.

Spokane public Montessori and the development of a training center

Spokane Public Montessori started thirty years ago after years of dedicated work by a group of parents who believed Montessori was the most effective pedagogy. The program grew from one classroom at one site to 10 at two sites by 2013. The sites merged in 2014 and there are now 15 classrooms serving K-8 with nearly 300 students on the wait list. Sustainability and further development of the program is largely contingent upon finding teachers that hold both an AMI elementary and a state teaching credential.

While many short-term solutions were sought over the years to remedy this common challenge with public Montessori schools, a long term solution emerged from the Community of Montessori Parents (CoMP) to create a training center in Spokane to develop their own teachers. Sending one teacher, Paula Gibson-Smith, to the training of trainers program through AMI led to influential relationships and work resulting in the creation of the training center. My involvement on the CoMP board led to the eventual Whitworth University connection to provide customized academic program development and support.

The first draft of the Master of Education in Montessori program was created and approved by Whitworth's School of Education and CoMP board during the 2010-2011 academic year. CoMP collected the names of prospects interested in seeking elementary AMI

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AMI Elementary Trainer Elise Huneke-Stone works with public school teachers

training with a master's degree and/or state certification. With the academic program in place and need established, CoMP and Whitworth sought to find the most viable way to run the program. This led us to seek partnership with Montessori Northwest, a flagship AMI training center in the west. The partnership was finalized in fall of 2014 for a summer 2015 launch.

The beginning of something great

Collaborative efforts between Whitworth, Montessori Northwest, and Spokane Public Montessori teacher, Paula Gibson-Smith, created the proposal for a Master of Education, Emphasis in Montessori program. Elise Huneke-Stone designed the schedule and breakdown of the courses for each term. Gibson-Smith's careful analysis helped determine the alignment of the courses to the state of Washington's elementary education endorsement competencies. This assisted Whitworth's teacher preparation programs in developing completion plans for students seeking both the AMI diploma and Washington teacher certification. Whitworth, Montessori Northwest, Spokane Public Montessori and Woodland Montessori worked together the first summer to transform one classroom into a model prepared environment for students to do practice lessons. The program was ready for the students.

Twenty-four students from nine states and two countries participated in the diploma program. Ten of these also sought their master's degree, and two used coursework towards state teaching credentials. Four of the students were employed at Spokane Public Montessori at the start of the program with two additional students hired mid-program. The first cohort finished in August of 2017 with great success.

Students provided valuable feedback regarding what worked and desired program changes. Elementary director of training Huneke-Stone also saw the need for modifications, noting,

> *The demand for high fidelity, rigorous Montessori training has never been greater, especially in the public sector and for underserved populations. Although AMI has a long tradition of successful summer trainings, we have felt the tension between upholding our standards and supporting those teachers-in-training who are already working professionals.*
>
> *Our summer elementary trainings attract Montessori assistants, educators with non-Montessori training or preparation, and primary*

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and adolescent practitioners who want to know more about (or work with) elementary children. Despite our recommendations, it's not uncommon, due to high demand, for people to start working in elementary classrooms after the second or even the first summer of the course. Some of these people have been successful in their Montessori aspirations, but others have been discouraged by their incomplete preparation, and by lack of support in the early years of teaching.

This feedback and insight led to innovative changes to the next training program set to start summer of 2018 including:

- Shorten the summer sessions to ensure students have a break between the start and end of their own classroom's year
- Create a way for ongoing support and contact during the year
- Change the non-diploma coursework in the M.Ed. program so it is more applicable to Montessori application
- Create a way to more seamlessly integrate the additional elementary endorsement requirements into the M.Ed. program

Montessori Northwest's Whitworth campus program version 2.0

Whitworth, Montessori Northwest and NCMPS worked together to devise responsive ways to address the recommended changes.

Shorter summers and more cohort contact: The Spokane program will pilot three online courses of supplemental Montessori lectures based on the coursework started in the summer during the academic year. All of the required AMI coursework will be completed face-to-face during the summer session. The online sessions are designed to support students in their practice. Modifications will also be made to the on-campus component to lengthen each instructional day and ensure required content is covered sufficiently. The net result will be six to seven week summer sessions. The format also allows for students to have consistent support and contact with trainer Huneke-Stone, lecturer Ellen Lebitz, and their cohort throughout the year.

Coursework that is more applicable to Montessori for the non-diploma portion of the M.Ed.: Three exciting new courses created by instructor Dr. Katie Brown and NCMPS will be offered as a part of the master's program, replacing other previous requirements. *Neurobiological Perspectives on Developmental Education*; *Early Intervention, Special Education and Family Engagement*; and *Advanced Seminar on Language and Literacy* were initially only available as a part of the Surround model offered at public Montessori schools. The three courses provide essential tools and guidance for practicing teachers in the topics of developmental psychology, the impacts of childhood trauma, special education, working effectively with diverse students, classroom management, and advanced literacy instruction. Brown notes, "I am excited that we will have graduate-level courses with an explicit focus on meeting the needs of all students in public Montessori schools." The three courses will be offered online in an interactive format during the academic year.

Seamless integration of elementary endorsement requirements: The three courses also meet the requirements for most of the remaining elementary endorsement requirements in Washington. After taking the courses, students will be able to complete the coursework requirements with an additional or extended student teaching placement to meet the state mandated 450 hours.

Overall, the program changes are expected to result in a more responsive program to meet its students' needs and those in the public school system. The partnership between Montessori Northwest, Whitworth, and NCMPS strengthens the program as a whole for broader perspective and expertise. The dream for a training center turned reality will have a much larger and lasting impacting on the Montessori community as a whole and ultimately, our education system.

Kathryn Picanco, M.Ed, Ed.D, is an Assistant Professor and Director of the Center for Gifted Education and Professional Development at Whitworth University in Spokane, Washington.

Courses in childhood trauma, special education, and diversity

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Credential recognition for Montessori training

Five states now recognize the diploma, with more on the way

BY **DENISE MONNIER**

We have a crisis in Montessori public Schools. There is a shortage of Montessori credentialed teachers.

The Montessori credential is not recognized as a pathway to licensure in most states, and credentials often do not transfer between states. This hampers our efforts to grow and expand to serve more children and communities.

Montessori parents need to experience a classroom led by a Montessori credentialed teacher, properly prepared both to provide an authentic Montessori experience to the children, and to offer critical parent education through events and conferences.

In states where the Montessori teaching credential is not recognized, Montessori public teachers need to have a dual credential to lead classrooms. While many previously licensed teachers are able to attend Montessori teacher training, it is not enough to fill the demand, and those unlicensed who are drawn to public Montessori may need to fully complete both types of teacher preparation before assuming roles as capable leaders of Montessori public classrooms.

The big problem with teachers needing dual credentials, besides the financial burden and time required to complete them both, lies in the misconception that Montessori teacher training is a "specialization" to pursue after completion of a traditional credentialing program. In fact, the Montessori teaching credential requires a program of coursework commensurate with the major portion of a higher education credentialing degree, with comparable required competencies and clock hours, and considerably more time spent in mentoring and practicum experiences.

The Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE), recognized by the U.S. Department of Education since 1995, is

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Georgia: In process: A MACTE-accredited credential + three additional courses qualifies for a teaching certificate in public Montessori schools only.

Maryland: Legislation pending for an AMI or AMS credential + special eduaction and reading credits to qualifiy for a teaching certificate in public Montessori schools only.

Minnesota: A MACTE-accredited credential qualifies for a three-year temporary certificate. Rule-making is under way to extend this to a full certificate.

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

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

North Carolina: Advocacy work is under way.

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

Tennessee: Legislation pending for MACTE-accredited credential + three special eduaction credits + PRAXIS to qualifiy for a teaching certificate in public Montessori schools only.

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

the national accreditor for Montessori teacher education programs and institutions. MACTE provides the public quality assurance for these programs and also gives our Montessori advocacy community a single unified form of credential language around which to build our requests. We can all advocate for state recognition of Montessori teaching credentials from MACTE accredited programs, and speak with one clear voice. States can have the quality assurance through MACTE, and will still likely require post-secondary degrees in any major area and possibly state specific testing.

Some states have already taken this important step to increasing the possibilities of offering parents the choice of authentic Montessori classrooms, public and private, by recognizing the Montessori credential as a pathway to state teacher licensure. Minnesota, Montana, Ohio, South Carolina, and Wisconsin currently have a provision for the Montessori credential as a pathway to licensure. Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, and Maryland, and Tennessee have work in porgress.

The process to credential recognition can be arduous. As this is labor-intensive work, a coalition or advocacy group can share the responsibilities for the state. The Montessori Public Policy Initiative has representative organizations in 38 states, engaged in advocacy work for favorable public policy supporting authentic Montessori education, and the goal of that opportunity existing for all children.

When a group begins the process towards credential recognition, they first need to establish what, if any, credit is presently given for the Montessori credential, and what the requirements would be for that credential to be a pathway to licensure. Every state has different organizational structures, so it is important to find out exactly who those decision makers are, and then establish and cultivate relationships with them. Many, even most, legislators and regulatory officials will not have working knowledge of what Montessori is, so offering school tours or educational presentations can be very valuable. Joining committees at the state level to support the work of these officials is a great relationship building tool and may also increase your knowledge of the process.

Start the conversation informally as the relationships grow, to get a sense of what might be acceptable to the decision makers. When you know that, it is time to make your ask. Prepare a written request and carefully articulate your reasoning for the recognition based on what the existing requirements are, in the language that the state has already established.

MPPI has recently been able to hire full time staff and can offer technical assistance and coaching through this process in coordination with MACTE. Once you have your request prepared, it is very important to have someone from MACTE review it to make sure that the language is all correct. Legislation or regulations put into effect with incorrect language could cause problems down the road and possibly decrease effectiveness. Often, there will be a face to face meeting scheduled with state officials, and Rebecca Pelton, president of MACTE, makes it a priority to attend and testify on behalf of the request.

This process is long and complicated, and may have setbacks before success, but when we consider the challenges our Montessori public programs face as they attempt to flourish, it is clear what an important issue recognition of the Montessori credential is to providing authentic Montessori opportunities for families. Communication and relationship building are the two most important components of this type of advocacy work. We can be confident in the quality and comprehensiveness of the Montessori teacher preparation, and the challenge is to find the language so that policymakers will agree.

For more information about how to join the Montessori advocacy organization in your state, or to start an organization if there is not one, contact Denise Monnier at denise@montessoriadvocacy.org

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Denise Monnier is an advocate and advocacy coach, working towards public policy that supports universal access to Montessori education. She is a past president and current executive director of the Association of Illinois Montessori Schools and the Director of State Advocacy for the Montessori Public Policy Initiative.

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Research and advocacy belong in training

Teachers can advance Montessori even after leaving the classroom

BY **SHERYL MORRIS**

I loved my training, as inspiring and intense as it was. Alongside the rigors of learning Montessori materials and how to present them, we studied Maria's philosophy (as well as looking at complimentary approaches, such as *Positive Discipline* by Jane Nelsen). I wanted more, so it stands to reason I would continue to seek out resources, especially online, once away from training, and then away from the classroom. Montessorians are among all of those that continue to make me a better, smarter person.

In this issue of MontessoriPublic, we were invited to share how we feel about our training and what may have been missing. Two areas I wish had been covered, even if only with an introduction, would be research and advocacy. Given the passion I saw in fellow teachers-in-training and many teachers themselves, I would like trainers and administrators to encourage and support those that have the inclination to facilitate research and broadly advocate, when possible, both while a part of the classroom and away.

To teacher trainers and administrators I would say this: Nurture trainees' aspirations as they nurture those of children; help them be all they can be inside the classroom and out, and more fully regard the words of Maya Angelou—"When you learn, teach, when you get, give."

Following the Montessori Research Interest Group Facebook page, I saw an insight into what it might be to dream big when it comes to teachers being involved in research, in an EducationNext post calling for researchers embedded in public schools: "Make It Local with In-House Researchers," by Douglas N. Harris. Angela Murray, the director of the new Montessori Research Center at the University of Kansas and administrator of the group, called the vision in this article her "blue sky dream." A friend comments, "My dream would be to study and research half the day, and be in the classroom the other half." I hope your dreams come true!

In training, I and many of my cohort felt, as many of us have, "This should be for all children!" Or at least, all children should have Montessori as an option. But it wasn't until later that I realized how large a role advocacy should really play in being a teacher, and especially a Montesssorian. It wasn't until later that I discovered Maria's own words about advocacy.

"The duty of educators is to insist before the world on the importance of this source of life; to stand together to make a space in which life can grow, where life can have the necessary conditions, and then have the patience and faith to wait for the result: a better order of life, and beings who are capable of living thus."

"There already exist public gardens and playgrounds, camping grounds, the organization of boy scouts, handiwork, scientific laboratories, libraries for children, etc., etc. What we need, then, is the leading idea which is to combine these things into one organic whole: the conception by which they will all tend towards the formation of man"

Trainers and administrators should encourage and support research and advocacy

So what's stopping us?

Nine Reasons Teachers are Unwilling to Stand Up for Their Profession, a 2015 EducationWeek blog post by Michigan teacher and writer Nancy Flanagan, is a place to begin understanding why teachers do not engage in advocacy. The reason that carried the most weight for me was that teachers "are too busy." This is where administrative

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support is needed. Other reasons, such as "lack of information" and "inexperience," can be changed with training. Given needed coaching, encouragement, and support, teachers and teachers-in-training can even be persuaded to advocate local legislators.

Within school communities, among fellow teachers and parents whose children are enrolled in the school, and at Montessori conferences, there is enthusiastic promotion and championing of Montessori. But if we are rise to Maria's vision of advocacy, we need to involve ourselves even more. Wherever there are parents and grandparents, caregivers, and other educators, Montessori can be revealed. Two places that come to mind are local libraries and school board meetings. Where else might Montessori be shared? Montessorians are not always visible at family events and conferences arranged by other organizations looking to all possible "best practices" for educating and nurturing children. Two such organizations are the Alternative Education Resource Organization (AERO) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). NAEYC, which has individual chapters in each state, is engaged right now in reviewing its standards for teacher preparation and needs to hear from Montessorians about how well our training prepares teachers.

It is not always easy to know exactly what you might do to further Montessori programs and philosophy once you are no longer in the classroom. Are you, in fact, still a Montessorian if you are no longer in the classroom? Thank you, Zoe for setting me straight on that! "You are no less a Montessorian because you are not in the classroom or managing a school." The best training would include more and more knowledge of ways to engage with the rest of the world, bringing light as only Montessorians know how.

"Once the general public realizes the sacredness of the task of teaching, and once the standard of assistance given to the children is such that the results in the lives of the adults produced by it is fine and great, then the teachers will be regarded as benefactors to humanity and their advice and assistance will be sought."

Sheryl Morris moved from book publishing to AMS 3-6 training and now enjoys assisting early-education programs at the public library and independent studies include math education, holistic educations, and social justice.

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Distance learning and Montessori training

Is breathing the same air as our sages necessary for transformation?

BY **TAMMY OESTING**

If you had asked me ten years ago if I thought Montessori guides could be trained mostly online and undergo the spiritual transformation necessary to optimally practice Montessori in the field, I would have vehemently asserted, "Absolutely not!"

Today, I'm humbled and pleased to say that I stand corrected.

My revelations shared here are garnered after years as an instructor in a brick-and-mortar Montessori education program and now as a field consultant for both an on-site training center and a MACTE-accredited "blended" distance learning program. ("Blended learning" refers to a mixed online and face-to-face delivery model. MACTE requires 120 hours of face-to-face course delivery for instruction along with other requirements for blended programs and does not accredit 100% online models.)

Maybe more importantly, as a location-independent Montessori consultant, I have the unique privilege of visiting schools across North America practicing under the full gamut of alphabet soup affiliations (AMI, AMS, and others). My newfound perspective has been cultivated by hours of observing in classrooms taught by guides from a variety of experiences and trainings, acquired through traditional on-site and blended distance learning programs. Additionally, my thoughts here were synthesized through a lively discussion in a Montessori Teacher Educators' social media group that is inclusive of affiliation and delivery.

Montessori teacher education programs around the world stand on the shoulders of sages that share their essential nature and impart the wisdom and fidelity of Montessori pedagogy to eager learners. To simply breathe the same air as a master teacher educator is invigorating and inspirational. Yet the question arises: is it necessary for the transformation of the adult learner?

Standards for Montessori teacher education are set by MACTE (Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education), and their Distance Education Policy clearly outlines the requirements such as the same content, the same community engagement between educators and learners, and the same overall effectiveness as an on-site course is delivered. In fact, the policy states that distance learning "program outcomes must be comparable to those of on-site certification courses." (www.macte.org/distance-learning/distance-education-policy/)

If MACTE has regulated these standards across the board, then why are many Montessori teachers, administrators, and educators still wary of distance learning? I believe it's because like the Montessori methodology itself, there continue to be many misperceptions of the model. Several concerns I hear about include: How is it possible to build a community of learners if they're not able to be in the same room as one another? How can learners possibly acquire the nuances of content online? How do teacher educators evaluate whether the learning is transferring into practice?

The heart of the answer may be in the format of the program, whether it be on-site or distance. I've learned that not all training centers are created the same, live or online.

Let's compare content delivery: as an on-site instructor, I found I had to sometimes curb in-the-moment questions and rush a bit to ensure all the content was covered in the time allotted. Our learners had to keep pace with my time management and there were rarely enough hours in the day for practice to become habit or to be reviewed closely. Additionally, as our program was a summer intensive (as many on-site programs are), by the fourth week our learner's brains were at maximum capacity for new

How is it possible to build a community of learners if they're not in the same room as one another?

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information and enthusiasm waned. Massive amounts of information imparted in a short amount of time means less time for deep reflection and processing and less effective training.

On the other hand, the distance learning program I'm familiar with offers videos of instructors over the course of eighteen months, which can be watched, processed, and reviewed at one's own pace, and when paired with rigorous peer and instructor engagement, deepensunderstanding. We know a lot about about principles of optimal adult learning—for instance, interval time to process information is essential to deepen understanding. A distance learning format can provide self-paced intervals.

Evaluating whether learning is transferred is a colossal task for teacher educators whether they're on-site or online. Philosophical understanding is often revealed through discussions and appraised through practical and written exams. In a live setting, my task as a moderator was to ensure that every voice was heard, to make space for those that held back, and to guide those quick to demonstrate their understanding to acquire the grace of hearing others. Online, this task is far easier, as the guiding instructor is able to prompt every learner's voice with a wider variety of modalities such as weekly video chats, email, and forum discussions. As MACTE requires distance learning programs to implement a minimum of 120 residential (live) hours in addition to the online content delivery, practical exams continue to be an option for real-time evaluation.

My impression from opponents to Montessori distance learning programs is that authentic relationships and collaboration cannot be had online. I used to be of this same opinion, yet in the past few years I have had the amazing opportunity to cultivate professional and personal relationships with incredible people across the globe, solely through online engagement. While my daily or weekly connections are enhanced at conferences when hugs ensue and real-time humor and joy is expressed, I can testify to the amazing power of technology that allows me to collaborate and learn from others.

Some aspects of the essential bonding that occurs in learning cohorts are the feedback given and taken, the ideas that blossom and grow, the connective tissue of understanding, and an external form of accountability to practice new content. I'm not convinced any of these characteristics of a collaborative learning environment are relegated to being in the same physical room. Actually, I'm hearing from instructional guides in distance learning programs that these qualities are more transparent and easily observed in the online format.

So as you can see, the format of a teacher education program may be more important than the method of delivery, yet the question remains, do our fledgling Montessori guides need to "breathe the air" of their Montessori gurus to acquire their greatness? To truly answer this we'd have to delve into far more than variables such as program formatting can expose. I agree with teacher educator Jana Morgan Herman who shared, "Adult learners love their trainers not because they breathe the same air, but because they are present for and participate in their spiritual awakening. Their shared experience and proximity are connected in the memory of the adult learner." The delivery doesn't seem to matter to the learner, but rather whether their teacher educator is awakened. Teacher transformation is more about where the teacher is in their own deep inner work, and nurtured by those experiencing it by their side.

Whether you are in the "live training" camp or you've adopted the idea that technology has a role in the transformation of the adult, I think you can agree that taking a closer look at the components that make Montessori teacher education optimal is imperative to move Montessori forward. The work of spiritual awakening, so imperative as a Montessori guide, seems to rely far more on the individual's inner work independent of their training as a teacher.

Tammy Oesting, AMS certified 3-6 and 6-12, has spent the last 25 years delivering professional development workshops, consulting schools, and educating new Montessori teachers. Her passions include social justice, art education, neuroscience, and the magnificence of the world. Tammy serves Montessori globally through her company ClassrooMechanics.

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Adding equity to Montessori training

The importance of including anti-bias, anti-racist education

BY **TERESA RIPPLE**

Montessori educators love their training. For most, it is a transformative experience, one in which they come to see the world, and certainly children, in a special and distinctive way. Cosmic education unites practitioners in a vision of community that is cohesive and connected. Montessori education gives practitioners a shared philosophical grounding and a shared pedagogical voice. Community does count.

In an educational world where many do not understand the Montessori approach, the opportunity to come together to share commonalities is crucial. Doing so feels good, because other Montessori educators get it. But there is a flip side. Becoming effective teachers means acknowledging that both adhering to and critically assessing our training and practice is necessary. Montessori education has much to celebrate, but also much to contemplate, as practitioners continue in their calling as not only Montessori educators, but as educators in general, and citizens of the world.

Montessori education strives for equity. Equitable is defined as "fair and impartial, such as 'an equitable balance of power'—fair, just, impartial, even-handed, unbiased, unprejudiced". But the truth is that people do not live in equitable communities. My home state of Minnesota is a state that on the outside might seem fair, impartial and unbiased. But in a 2017 study by *24/7 Wall Street (*"Black and white inequality in all 50 states"), Minnesota was ranked the second worst state in the nation for racial inequality. Sadly, racial inequality exists in all states to varying degrees.

> *"Many underlying causes contribute to the ongoing racial inequality in the United States — and mostly they are interconnected. Higher poverty often leads to less education, poorer health outcomes, and more crime …*
>
> *In the United States, a large share of public school funding comes from local property taxes. African-Americans are about five times as likely to live in poverty and in high poverty neighborhoods than white Americans. For this reason, they are also far more likely to attend underfunded schools. The effects of attending schools with meaningfully different quality as a result of simply growing up in a particular neighborhood can affect people throughout their lives"*

Further findings from a *Minnesota Public Radio* story ("Report: Minnesota 2nd worst state for racial inequality") include:

- Median household income for black families was $30,306. For whites, it's $66,979.
- The white unemployment rate is 3%. For black people, it's almost three times that.
- The home ownership for black people is 21.7%. For whites, it's 76%.

A 2017 *St. Paul Pioneer Press* report ("15 years later, MN schools are more segregated, and achievement gap has barely budged") stated that "Fifteen years into a nationwide push to provide every student with an equal education, Minnesota schools have grown more segregated and the state's nation-leading academic achievement gap refuses to close." The only state doing worse than Minnesota on all of these factors is Wisconsin. Rounding out the top five worst states for racial inequality were Iowa, South Dakota and Illinois.

Given the bleakness of these kinds of reports, what can be done? Montessori education believes that honoring the contributions of all people makes for a better world. Montessori educators believe in the children's ability to bring about a more peaceful world. The question before educators now is—how to work toward a more equitable world? How can teachers push back against the systems of prejudice and bias that contribute to the so-called "achievement gap?"

The question before educators now is – how to work toward a more equitable world?

Montessori stated in *Education and Peace*: "An education capable of saving

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humanity is no small undertaking; it involves the spiritual development of man, the enhancement of his value as an individual, and the preparation of young people to understand the times in which they live." Montessori practitioners who believe in equity, peace, and the great potentialities of children cannot stand on the sidelines of justice. They can use their collective voice, their communal voice, to prepare children for the times in which they live. This preparation is, as all Montessori educators know, dependent on the preparation of the adult.

So I issue a clarion call to training centers to consider this issue. I know that many already do. However, reflecting on my own experiences, I did not receive any explicit training on how to better include those who are marginalized by society. I did not receive training on how to deal with oppression. I did not, either personally or with my training group, consider white privilege or systemic racism.

I *did* read and write about children as the "builders of humanity," and how education must build a new world with our children to bring about peace—amazing and inspirational ideas. I *did* receive instruction on how to include cultural ideas and materials from around the world. I made geography folders. I learned how to initiate peace education. I learned that respect meant quiet voices, quiet bodies, and following the child. I taught children to respect themselves, respect others, and respect the environment, but I did so without breaking down the word "respect" in light of culture. And I was never asked to critically consider how to adapt my teaching or Montessori pedagogy to help "young people to understand the times in which they live."

I do believe much of the fault lies with me. I wanted to reproduce the perfect Montessori environment, as illustrated and demonstrated so beautifully by my trainer. I blindly followed my exemplary instruction without critically assessing its efficacy. While my approach was effective for the mostly white, middle-class children in my room, I never stopped to think that I might be perpetuating a white, European-American-centric ethos in that environment.

At the same time that I critique the omissions in my training, I also revere the incredible gifts I received. I believe both conditions can be held simultaneously. Just as Montessori scientifically assessed educational efficacy, so must we. Our work includes critically reflecting on our practice—what is working and what is not—and what might be missing. As we move forward to grow Montessori schools, Montessori education must adapt to meet the needs of all children, without losing the inspirational wonder that resides at the core of Montessori.

As Montessori practitioners, we can tell ourselves that we are not part of the problem, but part of the solution. That is partially true. Montessori does promote a global cultural view and recognize the unique gifts of the individual. But critically examining Montessori practices in a way that most were not trained to do is crucial—to consider whether guides are truly including anti-bias, anti-racist approaches in their communities. The children guides are interacting with now will go out into the greater world community. Will these children be perpetuating stereotypes? Will they have examined their own implicit bias? Will they believe in the American myth of meritocracy? The late Fred Rogers remarked: "We live in a world where we need to share responsibility. It's easy to say 'it's not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem.' Then there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes."

At the AMI refresher course this year, Gretchen Hall, the AMI/USA board president, challenged us to "continue to open our minds and our hearts to the future. We must drop our individual roles, identities, badges and acronyms. We must not be self-serving, but united in our service to children. We must build bridges between the chasms we have created. We must stand beside all who work for social justice and on behalf of children. That is our legacy and our mission."

While I believe she was referring to the relationship between the AMI community and the rest of the Montessori world, taking her message a step further is crucial. Montessori practitioners must build bridges to the rest of the educational community. All children, not just those in Montessori education, deserve the right to live and grow in equitable communities. Can the Montessori community reach out? Will it move beyond its small and somewhat insular communities to work for the equity of all? I believe Montessori would answer yes.

Teresa Ripple, (AMS 3-6, M.A.Ed.) is an assistant professor and the program director for the Early Childhood and Montessori Programs at St. Catherine University in St. Paul, Minnesota.

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Montessori research center opens at KU

The center will provide an institutional home for significant projects

BY **DAVID AYER**

The posting on the University of Kansas *KU Today* page says it all in the first line:

The University of Kansas has announced the foundation of the KU Center for Montessori Research, the nation's first university-based center dedicated to research on Montessori education.

This is not actually quite correct, as the Center for Montessori Studies at the (somewhat smaller) University of Hartford launched in 2017—see the box on this page. Leaders at both institutions told MontessoriPublic that they were in regular communication and working to leverage their respective strengths across the large body of Montessori research work to be done.

So what does this mean? And what does this mean for Montessori?

The University of Kansas (KU), with an endowment of $1.6 billion and an enrollment of 24,000, is one of 115 "R1 Research Universities" in the U.S., which simply means it has a lot of people involved in a lot of research. Most prominent public and private universities, including flagship state universities in nearly every state, fall in this category. Research at KU is organized across twelve Centers and Institutes, including the Achievement and Assessment Institute, a $40 million entity which itself includes eight Centers, one of which is the newly formed Center for Montessori Research (CMR). So the CMR is a small part of a very large and robust academic research structure. But, small first step though it may be, it's an important move for Montessori into the mainstream university academic culture.

How it happened

How does something like this come into existence? "Institutes" and "Centers" such as those described above are "one of the ways universities organize themselves to respond to grant funded projects," according to Angela Murray, Director of the new Center. In this case, the project grew out of an informal "National Montessori Research Working Group", a gathering of researchers and Montessorians that began meeting at Westminster College in Salt Lake City three years ago, with the goal of building a presence for Montessori in the research world. At first, the group was simply a venue for bringing to gather scholars with a research focus to collaborate, cooperate, and leverage their positions in Universities, and to reach out to people not necessarily focused on Montessori to bring them in. One result has been a developing presence in the American Educational Research Association, with several Montessori presentations at the recent annual conference and a petition for a Montessori special interest group.

Last year, when the Brady Foundation announced a $3 million grant to study public Montessori, it presented an opportunity the group was able to seize. With the support of Neil Kingston, the director or the Achievement and Assessment Institute, the CMR was formed and was awarded the grant to act as the coordinating site for the project, monitoring data collection and running network-wide data analysis for

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Center for Montessori Studies at UH

The Center for Montessori Studies at the University of Hartford, launched in 2017, is part of a structure similar to the University of Kansas Center, although on a smaller scale. UH's Institute for Translational Research is a $500,000 operation which includes three other Centers and works to "'translate' scientific results into relevant outcomes for community and the professions," according to the Institute's web page.

The CMS is closely associated with the Montessori Training Center Northeast (MTCNE), and currently focuses its efforts locally, to "serve the local and global Montessori community by preparing Montessori teachers in the context of a generative research community and seeking to prepare the next generation of Montessori scholars." The Center plans to launch a fellowship program in the coming months.

UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD

five study sites over a five year period. (The Center was in the works already and will not rely solely on this funding, but the grant has served as an organizing principle.)

The Center for Montessori Research is part of a very large and robust academic research structure

Montessori fidelity

Another project the CMR is beginning work on is a "fidelity instrument" for assessing the authenticity of a Montessori program for research purposes. This has been a persistent challenge for Montessori research: since the name is not copyrighted or trademarked and anyone can use it, how can researchers be sure that what they are studying represents "real Montessori", or that the results will be applicable in other programs? Researchers have typically relied on AMI or AMS recognition or accreditation (which, while sharing some criteria, are neither fully consistent with each other nor widely prevalent, especially in public schools) or have developed their own models (as was done in the Furman Institute study in South Carolina). The latter can be resource-intensive for small studies, and a broadly accepted and validated standard would greatly extend the scope of possible research. Several templates across various organizations (AMI, AMS, NCMPS, MPPI, Montessori Australia, etc.) exist, and are in broad agreement about criteria, but they have not yet been brought into concordance in a way that makes assessment easy. The new era of collaboration and cooperation among Montessori organizations is now making this work possible.

Montessori and the academy

In her time, Maria Montessori was creating a radical reshaping of the education paradigm and, for a complex set of reasons, chose not to pursue her work within the academic context. This made sense at the time, but the academy has become much more open and receptive to Montessori as the movement has grown in reach and internal coordination. Centers such as the CMR at KU and the CMS at Hartford, the large-scale Furman study in South Carolina, Angeline Lillard's work in Hartford, and the Brady Foundation funding are indications that Montessori can find its way in the academic research world, and that academia is beginning to take notice.

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

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The Montessori Census is back

520 public programs serving more than 140,000 children – help us make those numbers grow

BY **DAVID AYER**

In 2012, responding to the need for an accurate database of Montessori schools, the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector collaborated with all of the Montessori organizations to launch the USA Montessori Census. This first-ever comprehensive collection of information about Montessori schools across organizations and Montessori affinities gathered information about the location, size, enrollment, affiliation, pedagogy, funding structure, and much more for over 2,500 Montessori programs, mostly in the United States, and provided the basis for the often shared estimate 5,000 U.S. Montessori schools, about 500 of them public programs. (The 5,000 figure was an extrapolation based on the number of schools the project was able to document and the assumption that this was an incomplete tally.)

Over the last six years, the Census has continued to collect and catalog Montessori school data. Schools can get listed in the Census in several ways. Many listings were imported from directories provided by national, regional, and state organizations, or other public listings. Schools can "claim" profiles added from other sources, or add themselves, and update their own information.

Beginning in the fall of 2017, NCMPS began a review and refresh of the Census, along with a major outreach campaign to get schools to list, claim, and update their profiles. We added some required fields, clarified some questions, and removed some (for now), to make for a simpler yet more comprehensive data set—and we're just getting started. In the next phase of the Census, we pan to gather more demographic information, including race and ethnicity percentages and socio-economic status data. We're building capacity to collect and share (on an confidential, secure, opt-in basis) test scores and other outcome measures. The database will become a reliable platform for deeper, "long-form" surveys and data collection.

Why join the Census?

"If you're not counted, you don't count" is a rallying cry going back to the 1980s, when ethnic leaders convinced Congress to greatly expand the ethnicity and ancestry questions on the U.S. Census, ensuring better representation for Hisapnic and other racial/ethnic groups. The number one reason for a public Montessori school to join the Census is representation. NCMPS gets asked almost daily how many public Montessori schools there are, where they are located, how many children they serve, what ages, what demographics, how fast the model is growing, how Montessori is implemented, and much more. We as a movement can use that data to drive funding and policy, to help get more high quality developmental education in the form of Montessori to more children. Researchers will be able to use the data to focus their studies, which will in turn drive funding, policy, and improvement. Private schools are part of the picture here as well. The more concretely we can establish Montessori as a growing, in-demand, widespread educational approach, the more we can extend to families who can't pay tuition to get it.

Visibility is key for private schools as well as public programs. As the foremost searchable online database of Montessori schools, the Census will be the number one place families and prospective teachers can find and learn about a school. Users can search for a school by location and filter by public or private funding as well as ages served to find exactly what they're looking for.

There is a network effect to joining the Census as well. For public schools, we use the Census profile to send one copy of MontessoriPublic for every teacher (or a different number, if the school chooses). As we integrate the Census with Teach-Montessori, job postings will link to Census profiles, so schools can keep their information up to date in just one location. Census schools benefit from social media cross-connections as well.

"If you're not counted, you don't count." The main reason for public Montessori schools to join is representation.

Listing, claiming, or updating a

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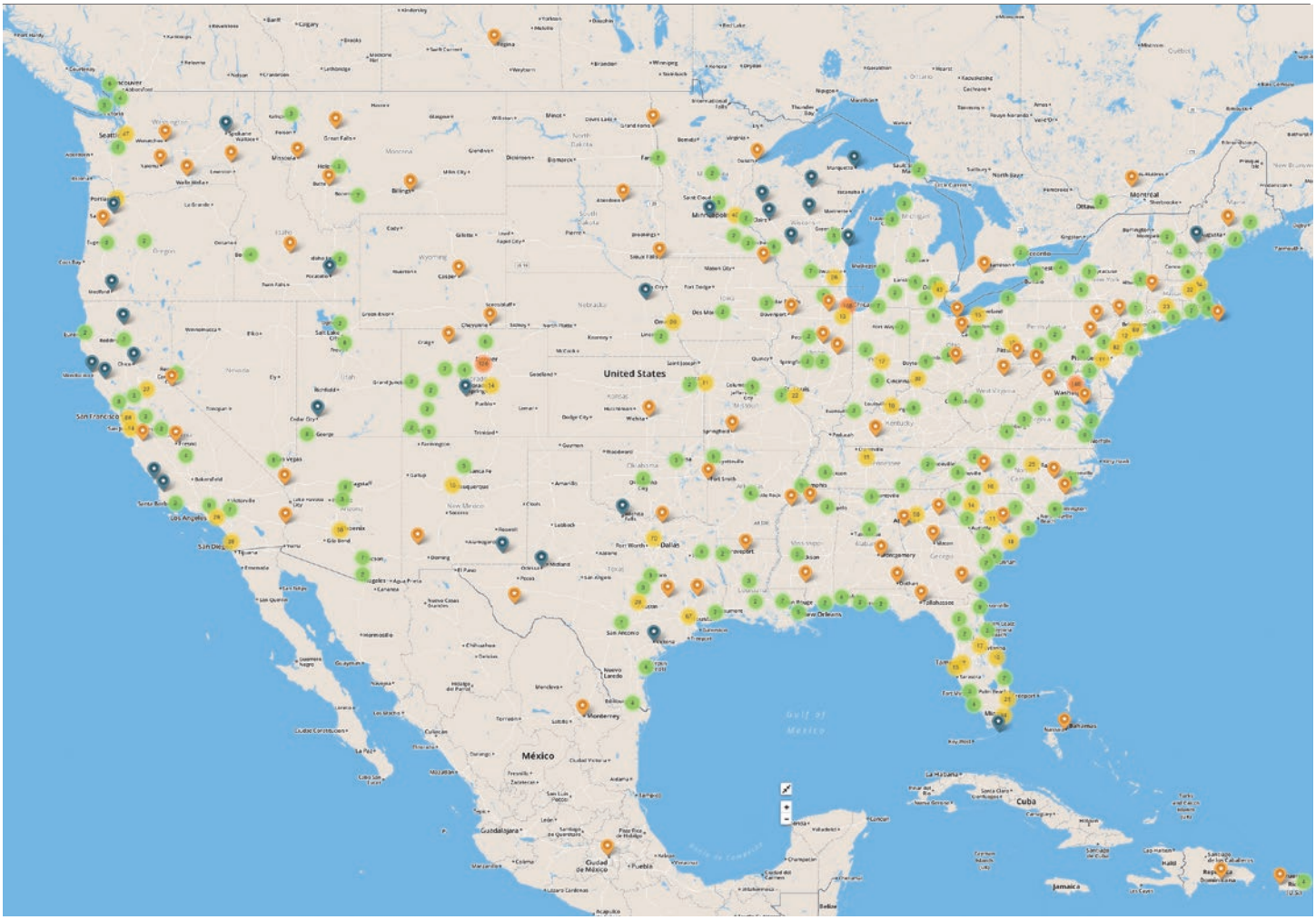

With the help of hundreds of schools, we're putting public Montessori on the map

school's profile is easy to do. It's best it someone from the school administration becomes the Census user, so the information can be kept up to date. There are three ways to get a school listed correctly:

- If your school is missing, a school administrator should make an account and create a school profile.
- If your school is listed but unclaimed, an administrator should make an account, claim the school, and update the information.
- If your school is listed and claimed but needs updating, the Census user at your school should sign in and update.

The website address is www.montessoricensus.org, and easy to find on Google. If you've already listed yours school, we thank you for you contribution to getting Montessori counted. If your school isn't listed, claimed, or updated, what are you waiting for? Get your school counted today!

David Ayer is Communications Director for NCMPS, which includes managing the Montessori Census

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