



OPEN FORUM

Winter 2013

MONTESSORI EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS INTERNATIONAL

www.mepiforum.org

Have you counted the days before our annual gathering this month at Pawley's Island, SC, close to Myrtle Beach: the Hands for Peace Conference ? This is MEPI's major event. This edition of your Open Forum Newsletter provides you with information about this gathering and the vitality of our dynamic organization.

MEPI is proud
to be a sponsor of the
**2013 International
Montessori Congress**



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President's Message



This issue of this Open Forum brings news of the upcoming annual conference at Pawley's Island, South Carolina. The conference is a special time for me. Our small Montessori Educational Programs International (MEPI)—is unlike the larger societies not only because of size but also because of the consequences of our diminutive stature. We are a small town in the Diaspora, and we gather once a year to renew friendships and collegial feelings. And then we go back to our schools and classrooms on planet Earth. This pattern, being apart for so long and re-assembling annually feels, to me, like a family reunion.

As some of you know I was absent from those reunions for several years while living in Asia. I recall feeling—not every day, of course, but certainly each February—like a piece of me was missing, or like I was in the wrong place. Seeing all my Montessori brothers, sisters and cousins at my first conference back—the one in Spartanburg—gave me a sense of warmth and belonging I had missed during my years abroad. If you have missed a conference or perhaps two in a row, I suspect you know what I mean.

I hope to see you there. I've used up all my gushy vocabulary already so I won't go on about this. But know this: if you aren't in Litchfield at the end of February, you'll be missed, and not just by me.

John Moncure Ph.D.

This month, from February 22nd to 24th, **MEPI Hands for Peace Conference** with the theme: Science of Life, will be held in "a couple" of days ! Don't miss this event !

Maren Schimdt, the invited Keynote speaker is a Child development and parenting columnist of Kids Talk, collaborator at *Montessori Family Connection* and School Founder and Director of Walnut Farm Montessori School. For over twenty-five years, she has worked with children, and their families, as a parent and Montessori teacher guide. Her keynote title is: *"Building Brains the Montessori Way"*.





Your contribution

10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1... Sold

One of many exciting events taking place throughout the weekend conference in February will be the annual **Silent Auction**. The Conference Committee would like to encourage you to donate an item (or two) for this wonderful fundraiser. Items may include but are not limited to handcrafts, cookbooks, Montessori arts and supplies, themed baskets filled with cultural items or other specialty goods... the list is only limited by your generosity and creativity! Please bring something !

All proceeds will benefit the **Shirley Plath Fund**, a fund to support the charitable mission of MEPI, "*building peace in the world through Montessori education.*" Please consider making a donation to this worthwhile

SHIRLEY PLATH FUND

The Shirley Plath Fund (named for one of the founding leaders of MEPI) was created some years ago to support the charitable mission of MEPI, "*building peace in the world through Montessori education*". The funds are independently monitored by a committee of the MEPI Board.

During the February 2012 conference, the silent auction raised over \$700.00 and last summer a donation of \$25,000 was made to the fund to support Teacher Education in Utah. During this upcoming MEPI Conference, the Fund Committee Chair, Dr. John Moncure, will report revenues to and grants made from it, and will announce grants offered to support our mission.

Your collaboration is most welcome: just bring an item for the Auction and it will be displayed in the Registration area; this is the place where you will bid for other interesting items brought generously by others.



From the desk of the MEPI Executive Coordinator, Mary Cusack

Just words of welcome while considering the countdown to the official opening of this upcoming MEPI Conference 2013.

"Welcome to MEPI"

o Two new MEPI Board members!

- Kitty Degler, a middle school directress at Clay-Platte Montessori School in Kansas City, Missouri resides in Kansas with her husband of over 30 years; she and her husband have an adult daughter, currently at the Kansas Art Institute. Welcome Kitty !

- Martha Teien, a MEPI director of Mountain Montessori in Avon, Colorado, has her Masters of Art in Education Montessori; She is married and resides in Colorado. Welcome Martha !

* Montessori Teacher Education of Nevada - our newest teacher preparation center located in Las Vegas, NV. Dr. Aja Staniszewski is the program Director.
Welcome Aja and welcome Montessori Teacher candidates !

* Origins Montessori School - our newest Level 1 Internship Site located in Parkville, MO.
Welcome Jen Fuller and Lisa Bergrud - co-owners.

* Welcome to new MEPI Internship sites:

- ~ Another Way Montessori School in Park City, UT
- ~ Bloomington Montessori School in Bloomington, IN
- ~ Dancing Moose Montessori in West Valley City, UT
- ~ Schoolhouse Montessori in Farmington Hills, MI

MEPI Teacher Preparation

MEPI Training Locations



Are we for the promotion of peace ?

The MEPI International Montessori School Accreditation

Montessori School Accreditation is becoming ever more important.

MEPI has already implemented a comprehensive International Montessori School Accreditation to serve ALL Montessori Schools located upon any continent of planet Earth.

Accreditation of a school by MEPI confirms publicly that it demonstrates and promotes authentic Montessori philosophy and educational practice for the benefit of children, families, and the global professional community.

Through the completion of an accreditation process, MEPI provides any Montessori school in the world the essential confirmation, affirmation and endorsement that this school has completed and obtained the MEPI International School Accreditation Standard, and is now a MEPI International Accredited School. MEPI's focus is on the core values, philosophies and methodologies of the Montessori approach to education. It is meant to be affordable and streamlined, to focus on the essential elements of authentic Montessori practice not only in the classroom but also on the entire school campus.

MEPI International School Accreditation www.mepiforum.org



Our President, Dr. John Moncure, for the second time, joined The Montessori Leadership Collaborative" group" (MLC) which first convened in Washington DC on September 2012 to continue their work in planning for a more collaborative future for the Montessori movement with the unanimous goal of bringing Montessori to more children in this country.

Here are some points of news on from the Montessori Leaders Collaborative (MLC) in Austin, TX from January 11 to 13, 2013.

The Montessori Leaders Collaborative (MLC) group members convened in Austin, Texas from January 11-13, 2013 to build on our previous work over the past fourteen months in planning and implementing a collaborative and successful future for the Montessori movement. Our unanimous goal is to bring high quality Montessori to more children.

These face-to-face meetings of the leaders of several Montessori organizations continue to deepen the sense of shared purpose we feel. It is becoming more clear that it is possible to appreciate the diversity of thought in our movement while discovering commonalities. We are very cognizant that if we model the behavior, collaboration, creativity, respect, and enthusiasm that our students exhibit in the classroom, there is no limit to what the Montessori movement can achieve!

We rolled up our sleeves and got to work in small teams on the first day of our meeting, moving the collaborative needle forward in areas such as funding, communications/advocacy, an emphasis on ages 0-6, re-search, teacher training, and reaching parents/alumni. On the second and third days we convened the whole group in order to come up with concrete next steps within those areas where we found consensus and interesting opportunities for action.

A number of concrete next steps worth noting here:

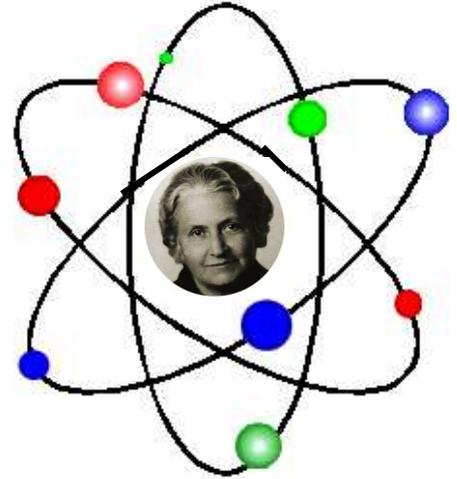
1. It is clear that engaging a communications firm will help us to articulate the message of the Montessori movement as a whole more strategically and effectively. We want to influence policy through our advocacy work. The conveners (The McCall Kulak Family Foundation and the McTeague Catalyst Fund) are beginning a search process this month.
2. A focus and planning process on birth-6 was one of our key successes at this meeting. There is an opportunity for Montessori to play a big part in birth-6 education nationally. The group endorsed a proposal for the establishment of a task force to create a template for the development of early childhood education centers. There is broad support for this effort.
3. Research projects have been launched with the support of the MLC and the financial backing of the Foundations. Studies on topics such as student outcomes are essential for us to be able to use hard data to back up the results of the Montessori method that we have so often seen with our own eyes. We are determined to collect this data and use it strategically in order to benefit all Montessorians.
4. The MLC began a discussion of differences and commonalities in teacher training offered by the various Montessori training organizations, including AMS, AMI, MEPI and other teacher training programs. We focused on establishing a framework for further discussion, identifying dimensions along which to compare the different trainings, and beginning to plan how to bring our pedagogical experts into the conversation. Bringing Montessori to more children, particularly in the public sector, means ensuring that we have the capacity to train enough excellent Montessori teachers. MLC has taken a giant step forward in changing the tone of this conversation about training from what we recognize it has been for the past half century. The MLC will continue to work through these issues to find ways to support each other in our broader goal of bringing Montessori to more children.
5. A state-mapping project is underway that will result in a database of state and local organizations involved in Montessori advocacy, professional development and networking. We also agreed to build on the data currently in the database of MACTE (the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education) to develop a more comprehensive view of Montessori training resources. We want to know exactly where our movement's resources are.
6. The McCall Kulak Family Foundation and the McTeague Catalyst Fund continue to act on our behalf through collective fundraising efforts and have received offers from a number of grantmaking foundations to support Montessori in the U.S. They have also been invited to the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI-America) in June 2013 to participate in the early childhood development working group.
7. The MLC will host a panel discussion at the International Montessori Congress in Portland in August 2013.
8. We will continue to have in-person and virtual meetings of the MLC on an ongoing basis. We hope to meet at the Hershey Montessori School in Ohio in the Spring of 2013. We will continue to proudly share the progress of the group.

MLC Participants: Jackie Cossentino, Jennifer Davidson, Steven Hughes, Jacquie Maughan, Janet McDonell, Virginia McHugh Goodwin, John Moncure, Rebecca Pelton, Sue Pritzker, Ginny Riga, André Roberfroid, Richard Ungerer, Trevor Eissler, David Kahn, Mark Powell, Tim Seldin and John Snyder
Conveners: Marianna McCall, Laurie McTeague and Stephanie Miller.

MEPI Hands for Peace

The Science of Life

2013 Conference



Top 10 reasons to attend !

- 1. It gives you an opportunity to leave your classroom and renew at a great setting:**
Being at an ocean setting is invigorating for the soul.
- 2. It's wonderful to surround yourself with a large group of like-minded adults with a common Montessori purpose!** The Children - how great is that!!
- 3. The Keynote Speaker is top in her field:** Maren Schmidt www.marenschmidt.com
- 4. There are workshops dealing with The Arts** (music, art, movement) Awaken your creative side!
- 5. There are workshops dealing with Academics** (practical life, handwriting, geology, science, botany)
Can you possibly fit them all in?
- 6. There are workshops for personal renewal** (yoga, spirituality, laughter)
Helping us to become more centered in life....and who can't use that!
- 7. There are workshops for ALL levels** (Infant Toddler, Early Childhood, Elementary, Adolescent, Teacher educators, Administration)
- 8. It's a great time to reconnect with friends.** Lots of familiar faces. And if you're new this year, you will wonder what took you so long to attend!
- 9. It's a great opportunity to validate your life with Montessori** You will come away energized, excited, and revitalized which we all need to be effective in our Montessori roles as directors, administrators, trainers and parents.
- 10. Be Peace** - This is where Montessori began - it is where we shall always strive to continue.
May the circle never be broken.

See you there ! Please register ay: www.mepiforum.org/conference



Dr. Sherryl Sweet Miller was recently honoured and recognized as a distinguished Montessori Educator during the first joint Conference of MACTE / IAME last November in Alexandria, Virginia.



Among the participants at this Conference regarding *Inquiry, Evidence and Excellence in Montessori Teacher Education*, were from MEPI Teresa Noble, MACTE Commissioner, Leila O'Neil, Beth Langley, Daniel and Julien Jutras.