

# OPEN FORUM

montessori educational programs international



MEPI Newsletter

Spring Issue: March 2014

## Twenty Year Celebration

The Hands for Peace Conference held February 20-22, 2015 was a tremendous success. It was an opportunity to reflect on twenty years of MEPI.

We were honored to have MEPI Founders Sheryl Sweet Miller, Marianne Bivins, Beti Wyn Holcombe, along with Melody Mosby and Warren McPherson from our Council of Elders present to reinforce our mission statement and celebrate our heritage.

The conference broke records on overall attendance and also at our Annual General Meeting (AGM). The AGM offers the board an opportunity to share with you, our members, what we have been doing on your behalf!

The excitement on what lies ahead for MEPI and Montessori in the world is palpable and I know the board was able to carry that away from Pawleys Island to utilize in our work ahead.

**Martha Teien, M.A.**  
*Vice President*

Montessori schools are currently in the progression of completion of the MEPI International School Accreditation process:

- The Montessori School of Camden, Camden, South Carolina
- Mountain Montessori, Avon, Colorado
- National Nursery Montessori, Qurum, Muscat, Oman
- Brackendale Montessori School, Ajax, Ontario

Interested in becoming a MEPI International Accredited School?  
please follow the link: <http://www.mepiforum.org/IMSA>



**Marianne Bivins, Maria Montessori, Sheryl Sweet at Hands for Peace 2015**

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Dr. John Moncure

# President's Message

## President's Message

I'd like to report, in this newsletter, how satisfying it was at the conference last month to introduce the members of the MEPI Board and the chairs of its committees as they outlined the work their committees had done during the previous year. If you were in the theater at Litchfield I hope you were able to see behind the curtain to appreciate how much work it has taken to get us to where we are. I would like to give you a broad brush of the overall status of our society.

First, we are in about as healthy a position as I have seen us since I joined in 1998. We are financially solvent (if not wealthy). Our conferences have a national reputation for quality—a reputation likely to spread as this year, celebrating our 20th anniversary, we welcomed friends and colleagues from three continents. Anticipating increased scrutiny from governments looking for recognizable measures of quality, we have begun a school accreditation program. To standardize the quality of our teacher preparation centers we have developed a four-part course to develop teacher educators. We will stretch our wings this summer with the addition of a day-long workshop / mini-conference in Utah.

The Montessori movement in the United States has benefitted from the recent enthusiasm for early childhood education. Not coincidentally, I believe, the various societies and independent Montessori leaders, schools, and teacher preparation institutions have discovered the advantages of working together in a number of organizations and formats. MEPI is sitting at the table in all these organizations.

Mary Cusack, our Executive Coordinator, does a magnificent job keeping all the balls in the air and attending to the tiniest details in most of them. But at the same time, it should be obvious that the work of many people, even beyond the Board committees, contributes to our success. I encourage you to volunteer as well, and lend your talents to the society that represents you to the Montessori world, to the legislatures that sometimes affect us, and to the general public.

I wish a happy 20th anniversary to all, and offer thanks to the eight brave women who founded MEPI!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Moncure', with a long, sweeping underline.

John Moncure, Ph.D.

President

# “Hands for Peace” WRAP UP!



## Thank You to Conference Attendees!

Despite the ironic and unseasonably cold weather in Pawleys, Island, our 20 Year Anniversary of MEPI was a very successful conference. The cold weather actually offered a unique and common language amongst the attendees. We had a record amount of attendees and workshops, over 300 participants! Although feeling crowded at times and having to extend classes off campus, these extended numbers offered warmth to the cold air surrounding us, bundled and snuggled up, we found ourselves laughing and engaging with strangers and sharing insights.

*“I loved all the POSITIVE ENERGY around me!”*

Jane Blunstein, the 2015 Keynote, was excellent and inspiring. Her “real” attitude was very comfortable and welcomed by fellow Montessorians. “Inspiring, I loved her sense of humor.” Attendees came with empty buckets and left the keynote with full buckets of inspiration.

**“I always learn and reflect after I hear Jane.”**

**“I could listen to hear all day.”**

**“Jane is wonderful. Many thanks for her great motivation and diversity of wise words to help make us a better Montessori teachers.”**

Workshops and presenters offered a wide variety of wonderful classes. Ranging from toddlers and toilet training to interweaving common core standards with Montessori philosophy. Classes existed of cooking, parenting, philosophy, gaining knowledge of MACTE- seeing the bigger and broader picture of Montessori growth, roundtables, hands-on arts and crafts, movement and music-, reflection and much, much more; truly a wider range of stimulating workshops to fit the needs of all participants.

Attendees joined us from as far as Egypt, Croatia, Canada and all over the United States. People left feeling inspired and rejuvenated.

*“Wonderful! Very insightful and emotionally rewarding.”*

*“Enjoyed. Made us think and appreciate the world around us.”*

*“Be proactive with your parents!”*

*“Excellent- I will cook in my classroom, beyond the crockpot!”*

*“Excellent sources, strategies, and resources that will truly help my cultural teaching.”*

*“Relaxing and fun, loved the new ideas to incorporate art into the elementary classroom.”*

*“Enjoyed it very much. Provided information on what is meant by Common Core.”*



# Summer Seminar SAVE THE DATE



**You Don't Want to Miss This EXCITING ONE DAY EVENT**

**Date: Saturday, July 18, 2015**  
**Location: Maria Montessori Academy**  
**North Ogden, UT**  
**Time: 8:30-4:30**  
**Cost: \$45 Early Registration (\$50 after June 1st)**

*The MEPI Board of Directors will be providing workshops on the following topics:*

**Creating a Peaceful Environment**  
**Learning Through Service - Early Childhood to Adolescence**  
**Public Montessori-What Would Maria Think of Common Core?**  
**Special Education: Interventions and Learning Differences**  
**Building a Strong Community during the Normalization Process**  
**Communicating and Collaborating With Parents**  
**Relationship-Building-Classroom-Management**  
**Hiring: Building Culture and Climate**  
**Balancing Technology**



**Maria Montessori Academy**  
is built upon the educational legacy of Dr. Maria Montessori who believed that all children are uniquely intelligent. The Montessori Method focuses on the whole child and facilitating the development of the child's independence and sense of personal empowerment.  
[More about the Montessori Method >](#)



# Executive Coordinator Report



## Thank YOU for being part of US!

It is hard to report on anything but the wonderful conference we all attended in South Carolina in February. The preparations for the weekend began over a year ago with many, many people contributing to the success of the conference. Every detail was planned, implemented, and thought out, yet, as we find every year, there is always room for improvement. Which is why we look to our evaluations so carefully. We value input as that only makes us stronger and helps us plan for a more successful conference next year.

Reconnecting with so many Montessorians from across the country and indeed, from across the world only strengthens my resolve to serve this organization the best I am able. I consider myself fortunate to be working with so many like-minded individuals who are all working for the child in some capacity. Whether we make policy or implement policy, we are only as strong as the parts, which make our whole.

Attending conferences, such as MEPI's Hands for Peace Conference, strengthens our practices, reinforces our self esteem and work ethic, compliments our daily lives, and helps shape our outlooks beyond our classrooms and work environments.

The nuts and bolts of MEPI land on my desk, yet it is by working with a dedicated Board of Directors who helps make my job successful. Together we laugh, together we sometimes cry. But always, together, we strive to support and help each other as MEPI continues to grow and make our presence known in the greater Montessori Community. We are a small organization with lofty goals and positive impacts of which we can all be very proud.



*Montessori School of Camden*



*Clay-Platte Montessori*

## Homework... Montessori Style

“A fundamental truth permeates Montessori’s work: children are desperate to learn. In a Montessori class, children are motivated to discover why and how things work. Therefore, homework, in a Montessori sense, is work that the child does at home, as an extension of his or her educational exploration“(Hektor, L 2010)

We know that parents are a child’s first teacher; this comes with a great deal of responsibility and it is a relationship that doesn’t end when a child enters school. Real learning is not limited to the schoolroom and children need to see their family’s excitement for learning and real-world applications, in order to fully reach their potentials.

Even though we do not require traditional homework at MMA, we do encourage activities, which constructively direct a child’s pursuits during home hours, while nurturing their interests and building family bonds. Science fair, continent studies and other interest-based or cultural focused projects encourage independent learning along with research and writing skills. The presentation of these projects builds confident public speakers and creates an atmosphere of high interest learning. These monthly and long-term “home projects” are best completed with an adult as a guide and resource for the child, helping the child to meet the expectations set forth.

We also ask that children read and write daily. Reading is established as a time set aside for reading whatever children find interesting (either individually or aloud), and writing is either in a journal or involves freely chosen creative or expository writing exercises

We may also ask that children practice spelling words or math concepts at home. In fact, many activities may constitute homework, including household chores. Responsibilities at home help the child develop language skills and cultural awareness. Making math a real part of the home environment (pairing socks and counting by twos; dividing a pizza into equal pieces; shopping and making change) and giving the child a voice in family decisions are important to the child’s perception of math concepts and economic geography.

The goal for the Montessori family’s homework is to be practical, purposeful and continuous; spending quality time inspiring children’s natural curiosity and love for learning. This requires considerable parent participation, understanding of the Montessori philosophy and regular communication with the school.

By Kacee Weaver  
Guide at Maria  
Montessori Academy  
and MEPI Board  
member



# Montessori Advocacy



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## TEACH MONTESSORI

**Aunified movement-wide teacher recruitment initiative to address the chronic shortage of certified Montessori teachers.**

During our third meeting, the group continued working on our goal -- getting the teacher preparation traditions loaded on website. To do this, we viewed the website together, noting the amount of information and how it was presented (information tends to be conveyed in pictures/ videos, as well as in words; written text tends to be brief and focused.) Ideally, summaries of the teacher preparation traditions will be similarly short and focused.

Various members of group voiced a longing to dive deeper and discuss other issues related to the website such as how are we addressing quality? what will be the tone/feel of website? will we explain the difference between Montessori and conventional etc? The listserv was identified as one place for such conversations, and we will continue to explore other possibilities.

Our next steps are

- (1) to reach out to our teacher preparation programs to ask students for top reason(s) why they chose their teacher education program;
- (2) identify the “unique selling points” of the traditions of each membership organizations;
- (3) revise our “elevator pitch” based on this combined feedback; and
- (4) consider what the criteria is for including teacher preparation programs.

## Become Involved!

Do you want to have more of a role in your Montessori Society? Has the possibility of joining a committee crossed your mind?

Look back here in the next issue of *Open Forum* for a detailed list of committees!



## Contact Us...

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