Why Montessori for Elementary?

This is the time of year when many parents are thinking about where to place their child for elementary school. If you look up this topic online, you’ll get a lot of great information about Montessori — the world-class curriculum, social relationships and community building. But the most compelling argument for Montessori elementary is our graduates. Our graduates start middle school with self-confidence and are skilled communicators. They are comfortable in front of an audience and have strong organizational skills. They are typically ahead of their peers academically and, more important, enjoy learning! If you have questions, we are happy to connect you with parents of alumni and the alumni themselves. Here are some of their comments. (Continued on page 9.)

We never intended to keep them there past kindergarten, but the more we learned about MSS, . . . the more we loved it. MSS graduates are far ahead of their classmates from other schools academically when they enter seventh grade, but it is the non-academic stuff we love most about MSS.” - MSS parent

“We had initially put our children in the primary program, uncertain about whether they would continue to the elementary classes. Now we’re convinced we should keep them at MSS as long as possible. Teachers and administrators aside, our children's classmates are confident, articulate, curious and intelligent. Talk with the students there. It's a great learning atmosphere where the children are actively involved in helping one another.” - MSS parent

“Some parents are worried about MSS because there's a lack of tests and report cards, but I went on to graduate with high honors from CBA, and I am now a dual major in Newhouse and Whitman at SU and am on the dean's list of both schools. I am not an exception.” - MSS graduate

Above right: In Cedar Classroom, Frankie Berrier, Nora Rovit and Elodie Michel collaborate on their grammar work. Left: Jasper Kyle (Willow Classroom) works on a science assignment.
Classroom observations, Parent-Teacher Conferences and Mothers'/Fathers'/Parents’ Nights are the most important times you spend at MSS!

You have sent your child to Montessori, understanding that these early, formative years are the time when her brain is still developing, making neurological connections, making sense of her world and soaking up information. This time is vital for her learning.

To maximize your investment in her future with the Montessori education you have chosen, you must understand how the method works, and what her school day looks like. Here is what you should look for when you observe:

- The children’s **respect** for one another, their cottage and their teachers.
- **Multiple age levels** interacting, as the youngest students observe and learn from older role models and mentors, and older students learn to be leaders by offering assistance to others.
- How your child’s teachers **guide** students rather than direct them.

- The students working **independently** or in **small teams** or **groups**, making their own work selections.
- The ways in which the educational process is child-centered and self-directed, allowing students to take on increasing **responsibility** for their education, friends and community.
- How the classroom is designed for **independence** within structure, allowing the children the freedom to make choices, make mistakes and learn from them.
- How the prepared environment with **distinct curriculum areas** gives the children a wide range of curriculum choices, in beautifully organized, consistent locations.
- The gentle tone of the room that allows your child to feel **safe and secure** as she peacefully pursues her learning under her teacher’s **caring guidance**.

Support your child’s Montessori experience and her teachers by scheduling your observation today!

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**Above right:** **Grace Dawkins** (Oak Cottage) works independently with math material, totally focused and engaged. **Left:** **Maddie Curtin** (Maple Cottage) does the multiple-stage practical life activity work of pumpkin - washing with focus and concentration.
Our classrooms, cottages and playgrounds have all received beautiful handcrafted gifts from Mr. Shichang Song over the past two school years. Mr. Song is the grandfather of **Mia and Saskia Enders** in Cedar Classroom and Maple Cottage. Mr. Song initially donated a picnic table to his granddaughter Saskia’s Maple Cottage, where it was enjoyed so much, he went on to make many more in the spring and summer of 2017. With the creation of our new Primary Playground this summer, Mr. Song made benches, and sand and water tables for both the primary and elementary playgrounds. He most recently made beautiful floor tables for all seven of our classrooms, a bulletin board for Cedar Classroom and a river model for the lower elementary classrooms.

The girls’ mother, Chunhua Song, recalled that “when my father and I worked together on the river model, it reminded me of the time when I was a child. I always sat on the ground next to my father, playing with those wooden pieces that my father chopped off, handing over the rulers, saws or other things that my father asked me to . . . . I really enjoyed the time that we made the river model together.” Now Mia and Saskia are helping him too; the entire Enders family pitched in to help!

If you are a grandparent and interested in learning more about helping out at MSS, like Shichang Song, the Grandparent Connection may work for you! You can get in touch with committee members Carolyn and Roger Williams, and Jackie and Peter Michel at MSS.grandparents@gmail.com.

*Photos clockwise from above left:* MSS grandparent Shichang Song making a picnic table with the help of his granddaughters **Saskia** and **Mia Enders**, using some tools that he made himself. **Tamsin Thomas** (Maple), **Aiden Post** (Pine) and **Jameson Loughlin** (Maple) enjoying one of the picnic tables at recess. Mr. Song planing the top of a picnic table.
The Grant family welcomed their third child, the peacefully sleeping Edith Rose Grant (right) on September 28, 2017. Edith’s older sister Josie Grant started in Oak Cottage this fall, and her sibling Henry has enjoyed attending the Montessori Playgroup this past fall with their mother. Holly and Lenny Grant let us know that Edith weighed 9 pounds 11 ounces and was 21 inches long at her birth. Welcome, Edith Rose!

Another baby girl, Seneca Sereine Kopina, was born this fall on October 21st, 2017. Seneca, looking alert (left), weighed 8 pounds 3 ounces and was 21.5 inches long. Seneca is French teacher Annie DeRegis’s second grandchild, and lives in Colorado with her parents, Yashi DeRegis Kopina and her husband, Greg Kopina, and their son Arden, who is now two years old. Congratulations to the Kopina family, and to grandmother Madame DeRegis!

Another beautiful girl, (right) Mackenzie Elisabeth St. Laurent, was born on her due date of November 12, 2017. Mackenzie, the daughter of Brittany and Timothy St. Laurent, weighed 8 pounds 6 ounces, and was 21 inches long. Mackenzie has already visited MSS, when she was 17 days old! Brittany is one of our Fitness and Land Lab teachers and also enjoys teaching in the Elementary After Hours Program. Congratulations to Timothy and Brittany on their first child!

The Martin family of Julie and Jimmy, and their children Emma Martin (Oak) and Issac Martin (Pine), welcomed Samuel Alan Martin on December 12, 2017. He was 8 pounds 11 ounces, and 22 inches long. Emma and Issac were thrilled, and have been a big help to their parents with the new little guy. Julie Martin is one of the teaching team in Maple Cottage, celebrating her fifteenth year at MSS! (See related story on p. 7)
Ireland Fernandez-Cosgrove (2013), on the right in the photo to the lower left, played the part of Venticelli in the production. All three performances were tremendously successful!

**BROWER BOYS UPDATE** Nate Brower (2010) completed a year’s study abroad in Belgium last year’s, through the DeWitt Rotary Club. Nate is now studying at Dickinson College as a freshman (on the right in the photo below). Jack Brower (2008), (on the left in the photo below) spent six months in Mexico, and then Valencia, Spain, through a school program at Haverford College in Philadelphia. Jack is in his junior year. Will Brower (2007) is completing his senior year at Elon University in North Carolina, and traveled with his brothers in Italy, France, Great Britain and Belgium. Their mother, Madge Brower, reported that “between the three of them, they have traveled to 17 countries and are fluent in French and Spanish. They are planning a trip to South Africa for summer 2018.”

**ELF JUNIOR.** Sean Warnock (Cedar Classroom) had the opportunity to meet the stars of Elf Junior at CBA this fall, when he went to see the production. Above, from left to right: Sean Warnock, Patricia Choice Getz, Elena Chiodi (2017), Fayrouz Enany (2016) and Christina Wojtowycz (2017). Fayrouz played the role of Emily Hobbs, Christina was Officer Brown, and Elena was Tootsy. The students of the CBA Junior High Drama Department did a fabulous job!

**AMADEUS** was recently staged by the FM High School’s Thespian Troup #98. Jared Dunn (2012), on the left in the photo to the left, had the starring role of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

**ROTARY SCHOLARS** Rotary scholars typically live in their host country for a year with one or more (continued on next page)
(continued from previous page) host families, learning the language, attending school and making friends around the world. In addition to Nate Brower, other MSS students who traveled internationally through Rotary scholarships are Sam Rigney, who lived in Thailand; Ellie Mertens, who lived in Mexico; and Luke Tarnow-Bulatowicz, who lived in Poland.

Rachael Lieblein-Jurbala (2009), photo above left, is a junior sociology and dance major at Connecticut College, also pursuing a certificate program in public policy and community action. Rachael spent this past summer working with Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence to design a movement curriculum for children and teens affected by domestic violence, and will be piloting this movement program this coming spring. This fall, Rachael studied abroad at the Costume and Performance Design Program at the Arts University in Bournemouth, England.

The Onondaga Civic Symphony Orchestra sponsors a concerto competition for Syracuse area students from seventh through twelfth grades, and this year’s winner was MSS graduate Kaelem Michel (2017). For Kaelem, now a seventh grader at FM Middle School, this was his orchestral concerto debut. He played the Concerto for Piano and Orchestra by Joseph Haydn from memory with the symphony. Kaelem is pictured above with music director and conductor Erik Kibelsbeck. Also a composer, Kaelem has participated in the Society for New Music’s Young Composers Corner, and in 2016 was the first place winner in the CNY Association of Music Teachers Advanced Piano Competition. He has been identified by the Carrie Lazarus Fund as an extraordinary talent, and performed at that live concert in the Civic Center. Kaelem actively serves the community when performing in health, retirement home and arts venues across Central New York.
After graduating from MSS in 2003, Anna Weinberger attended Manlius Pebble Hill School. She graduated from the University of Scranton with an undergrad degree in business administration and a minor in accounting. She then went on to Syracuse University, graduating in 2015 with a master’s in library and information science.

While attending graduate school, Anna enjoyed singing with the Spirit of Syracuse Chorus and interning at Southwest Airlines as the Corporate Archiving Intern. She especially enjoyed getting to travel all over the country on standby while at Southwest! She also worked at the Family Resource Center at the Upstate Golisano Children’s Hospital. While at Upstate, Anna decided she wanted to continue working with children and to get her degree in library science, so that she could work full-time as a children’s librarian.

In May of 2016 Anna found her dream job, as the children’s services librarian at the Kingwood Branch Library in Kingwood, Texas (northeast of Houston). She loved working with the little patrons, especially doing robotics courses with the elementary children, and leading story time for rambunctious preschoolers.

Disaster struck the Houston area with Hurricane Harvey in late August, and Anna had to evacuate her apartment due to the rising water. She waded through rain and chest-high floodwater with her cat Chip on her head in his cat carrier, and made it safely to her sister’s house in Porter, Texas, after riding in two boats, on the back of a dump truck and in a car.

By the end of the hurricane, though her housing complex ended up with 7.5 feet of water, Anna’s apartment was deemed livable and her belongings were all safe! Anna’s library — the Kingwood Branch — received 3.5 feet of water, and with the high humidity, that destroyed her Children’s Department. Furniture, electronics, craft supplies and all the books were ruined. Anna is now working at the Library Administration Building, and beginning the work of restocking her library and the three other Harris County libraries that were flooded.

If you would like to contribute toward the effort to buy new books for Anna’s library, donations are being collected by the Friends of the Library, Kingwood on their website kingwoodfolk.org. Any money donated will be funding new books for the Kingwood Branch Library.

Anna’s family has been connected with MSS for almost 20 years. Anna is the daughter of our primary music teacher and elementary art teacher Denise Weinberger. Her sister Julie W. Martin teaches in Maple Cottage, and her sister Jennie is a former Pine Cottage teacher.
This year our visiting artist is Karen Pardee, a Saori weaver. Saori is freestyle hand-weaving in which the artist expresses his or her creativity. Karen spent most of the fall semester visiting Willow Classroom, leaving the Saori loom for students to use in the annex. It is now in Evergreen Classroom and will move to Cedar later in the spring. Weaving is great for students of all ages and abilities, and it assists in making left-right brain connections. It helps build core body strength and can be a calming and contemplative activity. Karen has been teaching children and adults for many years, and most recently has worked with students in the Skaneateles Schools. Karen has the lovely Serendipity studio on Skaneateles Lake, where children and adults can visit and spend the day weaving. Many of our community members have spent time at her studio learning to weave with friends.

Clockwise From above left: Ian George (Evergreen) and Karen wind a bobbin for the shuttle; Jorge Niederhoff weaves fluidly, a mentor for his classmates in Willow; Karen works with Madelyn Ellis in Evergreen, teaching her the fundamentals; and Mira Gordon (Willow) is in her fourth year of weaving!
Why Montessori for Elementary?

“In many ways, the first school you attend is the most important because it forms your attitude toward work and education in general. My years at Montessori were essential in letting me see learning as an entertaining and essential part of life, rather than just something needed to pass a test. It was precisely this form of independent motivation that allowed me to complete the international baccalaureate program at Corcoran High School and pursue independent research through the honors program at Hobart and William Smith Colleges.” - MSS graduate

“All three of our children have attended [MSS] since they were three years old. Our oldest graduated from sixth grade last year, our middle child is now in fifth, and our youngest is in first. We never intended to keep them there past kindergarten, but the more we learned about Montessori education, and MSS in particular, the more we loved it. Graduates are far ahead of their classmates from other schools academically when they enter seventh grade, but it is the non-academic stuff we love most about MSS. The multiage classrooms and open environment... provide lots of opportunities for the kids to learn to work together, to think independently and to learn.” - MSS parent

“I attended MSS from pre-K through sixth grade and remember wishing it continued when I graduated. Montessori fostered my love of learning and instilled intellectual curiosity in me at a young age. While the academics were excellent, I found that MSS valued the development of their student’s whole being, rather than solely focusing on their students’ grades. MSS helped me develop many skills, such as strong leadership, conflict resolution and effective communication skills, which helped me become a self-starter throughout high school, college and beyond.” - MSS graduate

Clockwise from above left: Jaasim Zaman (Evergreen) solves math problems with a bead frame, while Danny George and Ronan Kenny discuss their research. Sierra Panipinto, Mari Emmanuel and Safina Ahmed discuss their newsletter articles (Willow).
Our primary and elementary Peace Celebrations were occasions of warmth and joy, where we shared songs of the season and of world peace. Montessori is often referred to as “Education for Peace,” as we teach our students communication skills, and create classroom cultures of responsibility, tolerance and harmony. We learn about the best that the peoples of the world have to share and that we all have the same needs and rights. Our families shared their traditions of light, which usually occur this time of year, including: Advent, Ayyám-i- Khá, Diwali, Eid al-Fitr, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and Rohatsu.

Clockwise from above left: Jordan Cain (Willow) brought joy to all as Frosty the Snowman; Savera Sumathi (Birch) and her mother Jaipreet Sandhu lit a Diwali Lamp while sharing their Diwali family tradition; Neve Gordon, Marielle Emmanuel, Ava Halbritter and Sierra (continued page 11)
“The Peace Celebration included families from diverse cultures and backgrounds representing several religious traditions. These families were gracious enough to share with those of us present how this time of year was celebrated according to their culture. In addition, children sang about peace along with several Christmas favorites in different languages. Our daughter’s grandmother, who was visiting from Puerto Rico along with her aunt, had the opportunity to enjoy this celebration and experience the environment of peace, harmony and acceptance that MSS provides for their students every day.”

- MSS parent

(continued from page 10) Panipinto (Willow) sang “Where Are You, Christmas?” Brandon Read, Anika Arasu, Sophia Cater-Cyker and Lucian Douglas (Pine) do the hand motions with a French song; Mitchell Rovit (Willow) and his mother, Arvilla Rovit perform “Lo, How a Rose E’er Blooming”; Evanny (Maple) and Tabitha Twomey-Smith (Oak) and their mother, Tish, share their Norwegian holiday candle pyramid; Oscar Cimmet (Maple) and his mother, Toni Carrington, along with Noelle Chiodi (Maple) watch the holiday traditions; Maddie Curtin (Maple) and her mother, Rachel Lamb, share their Solstice tradition.
Our students begin caring for their cottages and campus as soon as they start school. Care of the environment is part of Montessori learning, and taking out the compost is a big part of it. Left: Owen Pease and Layney Hurley (Birch) carry the compost. Right: Emma Martin and Cosette Nardiello (Oak) take a look!