

 WSMS

# Great Beginnings

West Side Montessori School

2019 | [WSMSNYC.ORG](http://WSMSNYC.ORG)





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# Great Beginnings 2019 CONTENTS

In Mimi’s Voice.....	1
A Letter from our Board President.....	2
2019–2020 WSMS Board of Trustees.....	3
Why: The Question that Underlies What We Do in our Classrooms.....	6
Growing SEED at WSMS: Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity.....	8
Staying Connected: Where Three Former Teachers Are Now.....	12
Alumni Notes.....	16
News from WSMS-TEP.....	19
From DC to Shanghai: Sharing Our Expertise.....	19

<b>ANNUAL REPORT OF GIVING 2018–2019</b> .....	20
2018–2019 Financial Highlights.....	21
Donor Acknowledgements.....	22
Volunteer Acknowledgements.....	33

## IN MIMI'S VOICE

Dear friends of WSMS,

Our focus in the classroom over this past year was kindness, curiosity and inclusivity, and this issue of *Great Beginnings* highlights some of the ways these characteristics have been part of our culture for many years.

One expression of those goals can be seen in this issue's article on the faculty SEED program. SEED, which stands for "seeking educational equity and diversity," started over 30 years ago at Wellesley College, and has flourished as the teaching community's way to share their experiences about gender, race and other systems of privilege, and address these aspects of life in school curricula.

Complementing that is the "Why" article: what we do, how we do it, and the "why" that inspires it. There are lots of things we have to do, like mandatory rest time and hygienic practices, and many more things we want to do to foster children's growing independence in warm, caring and respectful ways.

This issue includes updates about three former WSMS teachers whose educational careers had "great beginnings" at WSMS and have continued to flourish in many ways. And we also have news about former students, and where their lives have taken them. (Parents of alumni: please keep us up to date!)

We have had another year of growth and accomplishment: we now have a new entryway to the 309 building, with a new



security system for parents and caregivers. The renovation of the church basement at 91st Street in the summer of 2018 has provided new classroom space for our expanded Twos Program, as well as office space for TEP. We have three thriving classrooms for two-year-olds, with options for half day, full day and LAP. We added training for the Administrator credential to TEP, and, as you will read in this issue, the Montessori Inclusion Endorsement to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

As always, I want to express my deep gratitude to our community for their generosity to our fundraising and, with their time and talent, to how we accomplished so much last year. Special thanks go to the members of our Board of Trustees, chaired so well by Myles Amend, to our faculty and administration, and to the parents and caregivers, guided by 2018–2019 PA co-presidents Mary Pat Dowhy and Tenille Skelton, who have done so much for us over the 2018–2019 school year.

*Mimi Basso*

Mimi Basso  
Head of School



## A LETTER FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT

Dear members of the WSMS community,

I have been thinking a lot about how much has happened at WSMS since my daughter Ashley began her time here ten years ago: not just the physical changes—like the gym upgrade, addition of a Twos Program, new classroom and office space in the church, and this year’s new entryway at 309—but the not-so-obvious administrative and management changes which have facilitated everything from admissions to bill paying and record-keeping. As a Board member for eight years, I have watched Mimi encourage her staff to explore new ways to do things, and the school has benefited from their many successes.

None of this could happen without the support of the vibrant WSMS community: current and former parents, faculty and administrators, and friends of the school. We are grateful to have in Mimi Basso a head of school whose energy, vision and exceptional knowledge of the Montessori curriculum are an inspiration to the children, families, faculty and staff with whom she interacts every day. She expertly manages a broad range of responsibilities with warmth, good humor and excellent judgment.

I am happy to report that we have had a stellar year with an increase in overall fundraising. In addition to my gratitude to everyone who contributed so generously, I want to thank the 2018–2019 PA co-presidents Mary Pat Dowhy and Tenille Skelton, and their PA committee chairs, as well as the numerous parents, faculty and staff who so generously volunteered their time and talent to these accomplishments.

With deep gratitude,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Myles B. Amend".

Myles B. Amend  
President, Board of Trustees  
(Ashley Amend-Thomas '11)

# 2019–2020 WSMS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The primary responsibility of the Board of Trustees is to see that the School operates in the best interests of its students, teachers, and parents. The Board sets the purpose and policies of the School, ensures its financial stability, plans for its future, and hires the Head of School, who is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the School.



**Myles Amend,  
President**

Myles Amend is Associate Head of School for Advancement at Trinity School, where he has worked since 2000.

Prior to that he served as Director of Development and Finance at Rice High School in Harlem; as Principal of Tampa Catholic High School in Tampa, Florida; and as Associate Director for Institutional Advancement and Governance at the Museum of the City of New York. He is a graduate of Iona College and holds master's degrees in history from New York University and in independent school leadership from Columbia University Teachers College. He is also a trustee of De La Salle Academy and a past president of the New York City Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. Myles and his husband, Marc Thomas, are parents of a WSMS alumna who completed her two-year career at WSMS in 2011.



**Tim Daileader,  
Vice President**

Tim Daileader, the father of Declan and Madeleine Daileader (WSMS '14), and husband of Maggan Daileader, is a partner in Drivetrain, LLC, a fiduciary services firm. Prior to this, Tim enjoyed a twenty-four-year career in investment management and banking. Over the course of his career, Tim was a senior analyst at Litespeed Management and Strategic Value Partners, a portfolio manager at Stanfield Capital Partners, and the Director of Research at Knight Capital. Tim is a Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA). Tim also serves as a director on two for-profit boards, and previously served on the College Board of Advisors and in the Admission Ambassador program for Georgetown University. Tim graduated from Georgetown University, where he was a Baker Scholar, with a bachelor's degree in economics in 1992.



**Iva Mills,  
Vice President**

Iva Mills is the mother of twin WSMS alumni (2016). Iva served as co-president of the Parents Association for two years and assisted with the Annual Fund, Auction, Spring Fair and Admissions Committee. Iva received her BA in political science from the University of California, Los Angeles, and her JD from American University Washington College of Law. Iva practiced law for ten years, first at a law firm, primarily in the area of advertising and marketing litigation and, later, in-house litigating intellectual property disputes. Iva also serves on the Board of Safe Horizon and the Acquisition Committee of the Studio Museum in Harlem, and volunteers for the Harlem Children's Zone. She is married to Scott Mills.



**Kyra Nelson,  
Vice President**

Born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area, Kyra Nelson spent the first phase of her career as an investment banker with Cowen & Company and Credit Suisse First Boston, working in healthcare and technology. She then worked in real estate in the Bay Area until she moved to Manhattan in 2013. Kyra holds a bachelor's degree in history from Georgetown University and an MBA from Stanford. Kyra and her husband, Travis, are proud parents of four children: a daughter and son who graduated WSMS in 2017 and 2018, a son currently attending WSMS, and a son in a home-school special education program. Kyra has been actively involved at WSMS as a parent volunteer. Kyra is also actively involved with a number of special education organizations and special needs advocacy in the city.



**Mort Haque,  
Treasurer**

Mort Haque is a portfolio manager at GoldenTree Asset Management, an investment management firm specializing in below-investment-grade corporate and structured credit markets. Prior to GoldenTree, Mort worked at Sound Point Capital as a portfolio manager and at Apollo Management in their capital markets group. He spent a number of years as an investment banker at Bank of America and J.P. Morgan in their leveraged finance and M&A departments. He is a graduate of Georgetown University (SFS) and Columbia Business School. Mort is married to Henna Khan, and they have two daughters who graduated from WSMS.



**Jennifer S. Conway,  
Secretary**

Jennifer S. Conway is a partner at the law firm Cravath, Swaine & Moore, where she is a member of the Executive Compensation and Benefits Department. She regularly advises public and private companies on executive compensation and employee benefits matters, principally in connection with mergers and acquisitions, initial public offerings and other business transactions. Jennifer is a graduate of Georgetown University and Columbia Law School. She is also a member of the Steering Committee of the Kate Stoneman Project, an organization devoted to the advancement of women in the legal profession. Jennifer and her husband, Victor Manuel, have two daughters, one who is a current student at WSMS and one who graduated in 2018. Jennifer and Victor also served as co-chairs of the first annual Fall Festival.



**Dana Bliss**

Dana Bliss is Executive Editor at Oxford University Press, where he oversees a book publishing program in social work and counseling. Prior to joining OUP in 2012, Dana worked at Taylor & Francis, another scholarly publishing company in New York. Dana was born and raised in downtown Manhattan, and began his educational journey at a Montessori preschool in Tribeca, before attending Friends Seminary and then Colgate University, where he earned his BA in philosophy and classics. He is a Fellow of the Library of America, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the publication and preservation of the

nation's cultural heritage through America's greatest writing. At WSMS Dana has served as co-chair of the Fall Festival, Class Rep Coordinator, and class rep, and has pitched in at the Auction and Hooked on Books events. Dana and his wife, Saya, live on the Upper West Side and have two daughters: one a current WSMS student and the other a WSMS alum.



**Victoria Feltman**

Victoria Feltman is a nutritionist who specializes in family and childhood nutrition. Before going into private practice, Vicky worked at the New York Children's Health Project in the South Bronx, where she counseled kids and adults and taught nutrition education classes. Prior to becoming a registered dietitian, Vicky spent four years as an editor at O, the Oprah magazine, and later worked as a restaurant publicist in New York and Los Angeles. Vicky has a BA from Cornell University and an MS in nutrition from NYU. Vicky and her husband Josh have three sons, one who is a current student at WSMS, and two who have graduated. She is a member of the WSMS Admissions Committee and is actively involved as a parent volunteer.



**Lindsay Forbes**

Lindsay Forbes holds a BS in Natural Resources Conservation from the Faculty of Forestry, University of British Columbia, and a JD from the University of Toronto. Born and raised in Vancouver, Canada, Lindsay practiced commercial real estate law in both Vancouver and New York, and later helped develop the U.S. east coast market for EAB Tool Co., an environmentally-focused power tool accessory company. During her time as a parent at WSMS, Lindsay was an active volunteer—she served for two years as the co-chair of the Parents' Association, and, among other things, planned the Auction raffle, Bulb Planting, and Fall Festival bake sale. She remains committed to WSMS as a member of the Admissions Committee and the Board of Trustees. Lindsay is also a member of the board of Trees New York, a non-profit dedicated to the care of street trees in New York City. Lindsay and her husband, Ali Dibadj, are proud parents of two WSMS alums.



**Joseph Gilbert**

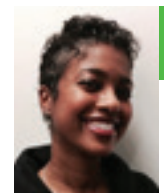
Joseph Gilbert is married to Damaris Hernandez and is the father of Mariana, a WSMS graduate, and Ollie, who is currently at WSMS.

He joined NYU Langone Health in 2015, after working in the Preventive Medicine department at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai (ISMMS). He serves as a co-investigator for the NYU Children's Health and Environment Study (NYU CHES), a longitudinal study examining the environmental influences on growth and development of babies in utero, and the NYU Factors Influencing Reproductive Success and Time to Pregnancy Study (NYU FIRST), a prospective cohort study aimed at identifying environmental influences that lead to difficulties in attaining and sustaining a pregnancy to term. Joe graduated from Bridgewater State University with a BS in biology, and from ISMMS with an MPH.



**Natasha Kazmi**

Prior to taking time off to raise her family, Natasha Kazmi spent fifteen years in a number of roles in the financial services industry, ranging from corporate banking to restructurings and asset management, across diverse geographies like Pakistan, Indonesia and the U.S. Natasha was a member of the 2014 WSMS Online Auction Committee, a member of the Admissions Committee, and chair of the Annual Fund. She is also involved in projects related to furthering girls' education in Pakistan's remote areas, and serves on Manhattan's Community Board 7. Natasha and her husband, Qaisar Hasan, are proud parents of two WSMS graduates. She earned a BBA and an MBA from the University of Karachi.



**Nigel-Ann  
La Qua Williamson**

Nigel-Ann La Qua Williamson was born and raised in Grenada, West Indies. She holds an MBA from Columbia University, and a BS and a BArch from the Bernard and Anne Spitzer School of Architecture at the City College of New York. Prior to taking time off to raise her family, Nigel-Ann spent nine years practicing architecture at HLW International and GKV Architects in New York City. She is currently developing her own company, one of the Columbia University ventures working from the Columbia Startup Lab. Nigel-Ann currently serves at WSMS as a member of the Admissions Committee, was a class representative for two consecutive years, co-chaired the 2017 Sandsational, and is actively involved as an alumni parent volunteer. Nigel-Ann and her husband, Marco Williamson, are proud parents of two WSMS alumni, Ayn and Adi Williamson.



**Scott Li**

Scott Li is currently a managing director with CRG, a healthcare-focused investment firm that has committed over \$3 billion of assets.

Scott has been dedicated to the healthcare industry as an investor, advisor, and executive for nearly 20 years. Prior to joining CRG in 2015, he worked at Hammond Hanlon Camp and Lazard Freres as an investment banker focused on mergers and acquisitions. He was previously the chief financial officer of pingmd, a venture-backed health IT company. Scott serves on the boards of several companies in the healthcare industry and is active in the community. He and his wife, Vernaliz, are committed WSMS volunteers, and were co-chairs of the 2017 WSMS Bulb Planting in Hippo Playground. A New Jersey native and long-time resident of New York, Scott, Vern and their two sons live on the Upper West Side. He received an AB in economics from Princeton University and an MBA from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.



**Kelly Morrison Opdyke**

Kelly Morrison Opdyke and her husband, Jonathan, are the proud parents of three children, including two WSMS alumni and one current WSMS student.

Kelly spent ten years as a senior technical advisor for Cicatelli Associates Inc., a public health non-profit headquartered in New York, where she led projects providing technical assistance to community-based organizations on the collection and use of data for nationally recognized initiatives, including the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program and the Avon Foundation Breast Health Outreach Program. She previously interned as a research assistant with the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and provided administrative support to continuing medical education programs at the School of Sleep Medicine in Palo Alto, CA. She spent her early career in digital marketing, co-leading an email marketing practice at online ad pioneer, Beyond Interactive. At WSMS, she has served as a class rep, member of the Admissions Committee, and two-time co-chair for the Fall Festival. She is currently co-chair of the Annual Fund Committee. Since 2014 she has also served on the PTA Executive Board for the Anderson School, currently serving her second term as co-president. She received her Master of Public Health from Columbia University, and a BA in psychology from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.



**Tenille Skelton**

Tenille Skelton is an active WSMS volunteer, having served on many committees since 2015, including two years as Parents Association co-president.

Tenille received her BS in finance and accounting at Tulane University. She has ten years of experience in real estate finance and capital raising, having spent her career at The Carlyle Group, Goldman Sachs and TPG. Tenille is a member of the board of Grand Street Settlement, a non-profit organization that provides programs and services to over 10,000 under-served New York children, families and seniors, and serves on its Executive Committee and Ad Hoc Real Estate Committee. Tenille is also a member of the board, as treasurer, at GrandLo Cafe, a social enterprise of Grand Street Settlement, that provides meaningful job skills for at-risk youth. Tenille and her husband, Travis Skelton, are the proud parents of one current WSMS student and one WSMS alum.



**Jing Wang**

Jing Wang was born and grew up in China, and came to the states to pursue graduate study after getting his BS in physics from Peking University.

After receiving his PhD from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2004, he joined Tricadia Capital LLC, a \$4.2B multi-strategy credit hedge fund, and has since worked there for fourteen years as a partner and portfolio manager, trading U.S. and European fixed income and equity derivatives. In 2018 he joined Millennium Partners L.P., a \$36B hedge fund, as a portfolio manager. Besides work, Jing would like to dedicate more time to philanthropic efforts and nonprofit organizations. He is married to Yi Zhang. They have two sons, Dillon, who graduated in 2019, and Aaron, who graduated in 2016.



**Kelly West**

Kelly West is currently the Director of Admission at The Browning School. Kelly first joined the Browning faculty in 2003, where she served

as an Assistant Teacher, Head Teacher, and then Acting Head of Lower School, before moving to Admission. Kelly received her MA from the Steinhardt School of Education at NYU and a BA in psychology from George Washington University.



**Mary Pat Dowhy,  
Parent Representative**

Mary Pat Dowhy is serving her second year as co-president of the Parents Association. Mary Pat and her

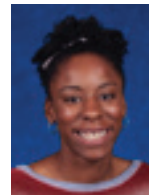
wife, Donna Canfield, are the proud parents of Pierce, who is in his third year at WSMS. Mary Pat received her BA from Fordham University and spent a decade working in theater before moving to Los Angeles to work in film and television. Mary Pat returned to New York to accept a position in marketing, managing high profile clients such as Absolut Vodka and MillerCoors. Mary Pat served on the board of the Empire State Pride Agenda, a statewide political advocacy organization that advocated for LGBT rights, including marriage equality. Mary Pat has been an active member of the WSMS community serving on several committees.



**Gillian Weindling,  
Parent Representative**

Gillian Weindling is currently serving as co-president of the Parents Association and has been an active parent

volunteer since 2014. Gillian received her BA in Women's Studies from Barnard College. Prior to starting a family, she worked in advertising at McCann-Erickson in their New York office as an account manager, and then moved to Tokyo for three years to teach English. Upon returning to the United States, Gillian spent eight years as the Chief Operating Officer of a boutique corporate financial restructuring firm with offices in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. Gillian and her husband Adrien are the parents of Sofia (class of 2017), Margaux (class of 2019), and current WSMS student, Elyse.



**Latisa Gilmore,  
Faculty Representative**

Latisa Gilmore is the second of twelve children, and knew since kindergarten that she wanted to be a teacher. She

received her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Bennett College for Women in Greensboro, NC, and earned her Montessori Infant Toddler credential as a member of WSMS-TEP's first Infant Toddler cohort in 2013. She is currently pursuing her master's degree in Early Childhood and Special Education through WSMS' partnership with Concordia College.



# WHY: THE QUESTION THAT UNDERLIES WHAT WE DO IN OUR CLASSROOMS

By Robyn Mernick

Parents and teachers are bombarded with questions from children, and one of the most common is, “Why...?” At WSMS we encourage our teachers to help children explore the “why” of the “why”—what initiates the asking of the question, what do they hope to find out.

But “why” is also a question we have explored with our teachers, to help them understand what inspires the procedures we use in the classroom.

As Simon Sinek, author of bestseller *Start with Why* and TED-talk star, articulates so clearly: most of us can describe what we do and how we do it, but not necessarily why—and that is the core requirement for success.

We believe that thinking deeply about our “why” as educators is in keeping with WSMS’s mission. To quote an excerpt from the mission statement, “We are leaders in teaching Montessori principles and incorporate the best practices of modern early childhood education in our classrooms.”

While teachers and administrators at WSMS use Montessori philosophy as a compass each day to guide our work with children, we remain open to new strategies and approaches that emerge in the larger field of early childhood education best practices. Our “why” is always driven by the directive:

how can we best serve children and their families?

Our answers are informed not by a singular source. As a school with a well-developed history, we are also attentive to reviewing long-standing policies and traditions in the classroom to ensure that the why’s that have substantiated these practices still resonate with continued meaning and impact in our community.

Classroom teams utilize the “why” in their communication and reflection together. With the guidance of Judy Jablon, WSMS Visiting Scholar, teachers have adopted the practice of providing feedback to teammates in a manner that not only acknowledges effective moments, but elaborates on why that moment was important in a larger context. WSMS school leaders also incorporate this approach in their communications with faculty. In a message to teachers in the first weeks of school, Mimi used this approach to share an observation of the busy set-up period.

*I noticed positive energy throughout the two buildings. People were going out of their way to be helpful, and that contributed to a strong community feeling.*

***This is so important because positive energy is contagious, and it helps all of us show up as our best selves for children and families, as well as for each other.***



Deciding on new school-wide procedures frequently involves a thoughtful conversation between administration and faculty, and an analysis of whether a change can be supported by a meaningful “why.”

In preparation for this school year, for example, it was suggested by one of our multi-age classroom teachers that we consider adopting a policy of having each child keep a pair of shoes for use within the building. Teachers who agreed were asked to share why they believed this to be important. A variety of why’s were shared: that the practice of changing shoes upon arrival and departure is a meaningful ritual that marks for children their entrance into a different space; that a pair of sneakers kept at school would ensure that all children are equipped for safe gross motor play; that the incorporation of this daily self-care task would further build children’s independence.

At West Side Montessori School, we regularly review and reflect upon everything we do, and integrating the “why” means we continually incorporate best practices into our community life.



## CLIMBING WALL

One big surprise for returning students this year was the new climbing wall in the gym.

The traverse climbing wall was designed by Gus Dollinger of Central Rock Gym. The fun and challenge of a traverse wall is making it from one side to the other, rather than up to the top. Children are never more than a few feet off of the ground, climbing horizontally across one of three routes: beginning, intermediate and advanced. The routes will be reset regularly to ensure that the children continue to be challenged. The installation was tested by “forerunners” Quinn Skelton (Garden) and her brother Alden (‘18), whose mother, Tenille, oversaw the project.

As Tenille notes, climbing is a gross motor activity that boosts physical skills such as balance, coordination and agility. Climbing also requires planning (“Where am I going to put my hands and feet? How do I turn my body?”), and the routes are set up like a puzzle to be solved, boosting logic, memory, problem-solving and concentration. Climbing is an activity where children of all sizes are strong and confident on the wall, despite their “athletic” abilities.

Becky Lewin, parent of Amelia Resta-Flarer (3E), and the school’s occupational therapist, agrees. The wall challenges a child’s strength and coordination, but also has clear cognitive benefits from the constant need to determine next steps mid-activity. Professionally, Becky has seen the impact of climbing walls in therapeutic sensory gyms. And she knows that every child at WSMS, regardless of age, size or strength, will profit from this exciting opportunity.



# GROWING SEED AT WSMS: SEEKING EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

By Giuliana de Grazia

We sat in a circle of fifty educators from around the country listening to words from Jamaica Kincaid's essay, "Girl":

*...this is how to sew on a button; this is how to make a buttonhole for the button you have just sewed on; this is how to hem a dress when you see the hem coming down and so to prevent yourself from looking like the slut I know you are so bent on becoming; this is how you iron your father's khaki shirt so that it doesn't have a crease; this is how you iron your father's khaki pants so that they don't have a crease; this is how you grow okra—far from the house, because okra tree harbors red ants.*

The SEED leader then invited each of us to share our own versions of "boy" and "girl" that we had prepared before arriving at the week-long training in San Anselmo, California. We were asked to listen without responding as everyone shared some or all of their essays. I remember one teacher writing about his father and the unyielding pressure to play baseball. Many women talked about early coaxing to be thin and to be "perfect." The serial testimony lasted for over an hour, and I could feel the room filling with the "gender boxes" we had been asked to conform to from our earliest memories, everyone's slightly different with many strong themes enclosing our sense of self. Interestingly, after we finished, the leader did not ask us to reflect on the content of our essays; rather, he invited us to reflect on how it felt to share our stories and to listen. How did we feel physically? What feelings came up as we listened and prepared to share? We were accessing



multiple levels in the activity: gender stereotypes, the power of storytelling, the stigma of talking about gender and identity, the challenge of listening, self-awareness of our own voice, and the many unspoken layers that comprise our sense of who we are.

This activity is repeated each year at WSMS in smaller groups of teachers who volunteer to join SEED for monthly meetings that build community and raise awareness about identity, diversity, equity and education. I am always amazed to hear the stories, the eloquence, the creative expression that this activity inspires. And, I have become used to hearing about the power certain experiences have of binding us to conform to mainstream expectations at such an early age. The question always arises: do our children feel these pressures from us? Are we building boxes for children to squish themselves into because it is considered "normal"? Many activities in SEED connect the personal to the professional, and after three years of SEED meetings at WSMS, participants have grown both as individuals and as a more collectively conscious community.

Last year at WSMS, nearly thirty WSMS faculty members participated in SEED. Stefanie Eckhert and I, who were both trained by The National SEED Project, led two-hour sessions of activities and conversations. SEED is an organization developed in 1987 by Peggy McIntosh and Emily Style. It was founded at Wellesley College, and today it is the largest nationwide professional development project led by peers. SEED describes its work on their website:

“The National SEED Project is a **peer-led professional development program** that creates conversational communities to **drive personal, organizational, and societal change** toward greater equity and diversity... SEED leaders design their seminars to include **personal reflection and testimony, listening to others’ voices, and learning experientially and collectively**. Through this methodology, **SEED equips us to connect our lives to one another and to society at large** by acknowledging systems of oppression, power, and privilege.”

SEED helps teachers become authorities on themselves, create a respectful community for each other, and become more aware of their work in classrooms, with colleagues, and with families.

It may seem that learning about and challenging the injustices in our society that are related to racism, sexism, economic disparity, ableism, sexual identity, etc., have no place in early childhood education, or are unnecessary areas of expertise for early childhood educators. In fact, this work is critical. There is a clear need for teachers to better understand themselves and their perspectives while leading young children.

Current research points to reasons why we, as a community of adults who care deeply about the early childhood experience of our children, must pay attention to our own behaviors and perspectives. First, a sampling of research shows that children are not only living in an unequal society, but they



## SELF-REFLECTION QUESTIONS FROM LEADING ANTI-BIAS EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

What experiences in school made you feel good about what your family is like, ethnic and racial background, economic situation, physical differences, and being male or female?

What experiences in school made you feel not good about those parts of who you are?

What do you think teachers, school administrators, and other school staff could have done differently to better support positive feelings about who you are?

also develop an awareness of race and ethnicity at a young age, and they make assumptions based on what their society teaches them (Soto and Swadener, 2002; Derman-Sparks and Edwards, 2010). By three years old, children have already developed ingroup preferencing (Bronson and Merryman, 2009). Soto and Swadener note in “Towards Liberatory Early Childhood Theory...” that while “it has taken a whole ‘oppressive village’ to systematically educate young children to internalize the stereotypes and hatred of racism...at the same time these research projects helped make the case that early childhood education is truly a window of opportunity for equity, social justice, and reconstruction” (Soto and Swadener, 2002, p. 44). To serve our children and families well, we must educate ourselves and our community about ourselves and our society.

How do we create these equitable classrooms and positive relationships with families? We start with ourselves. At SEED we look into ourselves, our ideas, and our practices, and we discuss and explore this with others, using resources, activities, and a dedication to sensitivity, openness and honesty.

One way of educating ourselves is through SEED’s fundamental idea to develop the “scholarship of selves.” This phrase, coined by SEED co-founder Emily Style, encourages teachers to consider the learning that exists in a classroom before bringing in books or content from external sources. Teachers and students focus on the stories and experiences that their own community can learn from. Style writes, “Half the curriculum walks in with students in the textbooks of their lives.”

These stories not only build our self-awareness, but also invite the practice of learning about others through listening. As we hear stories from our colleagues or our students, we become highly aware of the “danger of a single story,” as Chimamanda Adiche recounts in her famous TED Talk. If we have only heard that Africans live in rural villages, our knowledge is limited to an inaccurate stereotype. If we only read books with mother/father/sister/brother white suburban families, our knowledge is also limited to an untrue description of “normal.”

What if we never hear a story with someone like ourselves in it? What if we never see ourselves as strong, beautiful, heroic? Furthermore, what if we never hear a story or have a conversation about topics like race, gender or disability?

SEED gives us opportunities to hear one another's stories and to see the windows and mirrors that we share; we learn to understand our similarities and respect our differences. We can also examine stories from outside of our community through watching videos, listening to recordings, looking at art, reading articles, and even reading poetry. One poem we have read to observe "windows and mirrors" (similarities and differences) is the following piece by Lew Gardner:

*My mother's uncle had a horse.  
The best time of a deadly relatives' Sunday  
was to walk with him to the stable  
and watch him feed the quiet animal,  
to give it sugar from my own hand  
and jump back away  
from the big warm tongue,  
to smell the hay and manure, to see  
the white horse in the next stall,  
with tail and mane like yellow silk.*

*If my mother and I ran into him  
as he and the horse were making their rounds,  
buying up the wonderful junk  
they heaped and hauled in the wagon,  
he'd lift me up to the seat  
and let me hold the reins and yell "Giddy-up!"*

*In the spring of 4th grade,  
one afternoon of silent division  
we heard a clanking and looked outside.*

*My great-uncle! I could tell them all  
how I had held those reins!  
But everyone laughed at the hunched old man,  
the obsolete wagon and horse,  
the silly, clattering junk.  
I did not tell them.*

We have read this poem, with the guidance of Emily Style, to observe the different views through the window. Most of the fourth graders in her article laugh at the old man, while the narrator imagines himself holding the reins. Sadly, the narrator remains silent. What if the narrator could share his perspective? Would hearing his voice influence how the other children saw the old man? This activity helps us see the importance of learning from one another, and of speaking up. We can better understand how perspectives influence knowledge and learning.

SEED also gives us a safe place to talk about the topics we've learned to avoid, and therefore have no practice talking about. For example, this year we had several sessions with a focus on race. We reflected on when and how we became aware of race, and we talked about how race influenced how people interacted with us. These conversations brought up the topic of microaggressions, a term that only some members were familiar with. As we were sharing examples of microaggressions in order for us all to begin to develop a shared understanding, someone observed how uncomfortable it felt to talk about race and microaggressions. We all agreed it was better to practice talking about it, even if it felt hard. Another participant offered, "Can you imagine if we had been practicing talking about this from when we were little?" This question brought us to one of the essential reasons we do this work: our conversations bring us to a greater awareness of how we can be better teachers.

Another element of SEED discussions that directly impacts our work in the classroom is the practice of listening and sharing time democratically. SEED activities are often created with regimented time limits to ensure we all share time evenly. This can translate directly into how we give children our undivided attention in the classroom, letting them complete their thoughts and stories without a barrage of adult questions and comments. It also raises our awareness of how to facilitate discussions in which all children are heard and given the opportunity to share. Too often in conversations, whether with adults or children, some people dominate while others stay silent. The more we practice with ourselves, the more we can guide our children to strive for balanced conversations in which all voices are heard.

Finally, our work in SEED regularly brings up the question of "What can we *do*?" Sometimes our conversations generate feelings of helplessness or anger. How is it that income and wealth inequality continues to sky-rocket, that mass shoot-





ings are commonplace, that school segregation remains the norm? In SEED, when we dig into the injustices and the horrors of our current society, we have a group of friends and colleagues to support each other, to question our personal choices, and to talk about how each of us could work against America's powerful systems of oppression. Colleagues have shared their experiences protesting, volunteering, or beginning a conversation with a friend or family member who holds a different opinion. We remind each other of Dr. Montessori's vision of creating peace through generations of children reaching their full human potential. I don't think that anyone in SEED thinks that we have made an impact on a large social scale, but we all feel that we are participants in the change we want to see for our world and our children. Every empathetic exchange, every relationship we forge, and every choice we make in the classroom is a sliver of hope towards change.

We hope this article has shed more light on how SEED impacts our community, and we encourage WSMS parents to consider finding a SEED group or forming their own group to practice listening, sharing, and thinking critically about ourselves and our society. Even if the parent group only meets a few times over the course of the year, they could generate a community like the teachers have built and do work that benefits themselves and their children.

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## STAYING CONNECTED: WHERE THREE FORMER TEACHERS ARE NOW

Over our 50+ year history, WSMS has forged long relationships with families; many of the alumni family donors in our annual report have children who were here twenty-plus years ago! We have a number of teachers who have been here for a long time, too, as well as teachers who left but have stayed connected. This article is an opportunity for our readers to re-connect with a few of our favorite teachers.



### MELISSA VALLO FREEMAN

**Melissa Vallo Freeman, who is currently Early Childhood Practicum Coordinator and Administrator Practicum Coordinator for WSMS-TEP, originally came to WSMS through WSMS-TEP. After earning her Early Childhood credential in 2001, she became a head teacher in the Garden, 2W and 2E, then took on roles as an instructor and field consultant for WSMS-TEP. She left the WSMS classroom in 2009 for administrative positions in the school, then took on full-time responsibilities in WSMS-TEP. So, she remains very connected to WSMS!**

Growing up, I always knew I wanted to be a teacher, and eight years in the WSMS classrooms brought me joy and fulfillment. In my fourth year at WSMS, Marlene Barron recruited me to TEP—it was a weekend gig—and I loved knowing I was supporting the development of more highly-skilled Montessori teachers. With Mimi’s arrival, I became responsible for faculty support/professional development, then Associate Head of School, and married Josh in 2012!

After Mia was born in 2015, I returned to 2W as head teacher, moving to 2E in 2016. Our twins, Bryn and Cadence, were born in 2017. After a brief break, I was delighted to re-join WSMS-TEP. The weekend classes, and ability to work remotely, meant that I could negotiate the complexities of childcare, and kept me connected to the school where my academic career began.

Although I am no longer in an early childhood classroom, I am still a teacher: during the academic year, I teach Early



Childhood Sensorial and Classroom Leadership courses (via Zoom) and the Curriculum Course for the Administrator program, co-teach/facilitate History and Foundations online courses for the Montessori Inclusion Endorsement program, and present the Montessori Foundations course to non-credentialed teachers, parents, etc.

I also organize and support interns with their Practicum placements, coordinate and monitor field consultants, do field observations, and collaborate with the TEP administrative team at every level. And, in the summer, I coordinate TEP classes for courses in the Early Childhood and Administrator credentials.

Having young children makes me even more aware of how important a child's first start in education is. The relationship between adults and children fostered in a Montessori classroom creates a foundation for the trust, caring, openness and respect that carries through their lifetimes. In my 10 years in early childhood classrooms, I influenced over 200 children. And in my ongoing career teaching teachers, that number will grow exponentially!

## NANCI GUARTOFIERO

**Nanci Quartifierro started in 4E as an intern (now called a student teacher) in 1994 and, in a few years, was head teacher in 3W. After an “educational leave” as a teaching principal in New Zealand, she was head teacher in 3E, then 2E and 1W. She also taught cultural studies in WSMS-TEP, and served as field consultant and program administrator.**

After the 2010-11 school year, I moved to the Big Island of Hawaii and got married, barefoot on the beach! We lived there until 2017. It was a big change from living in New York. I traded taking the subway to museums and Broadway shows, to having to drive to explore the island and all it had to offer. (*Actually my husband drove me around, I still don't drive!*) We went hiking on lava, camping and stargazing. We saw rainbows in waterfalls, and went to beaches, snorkeling and swimming with manta rays.

Our plan was to buy a plot of land in the rainforest, build a house, and live off the grid—and that's what we did! We moved in when it was half built; we had to cook outside while the construction continued. As a city girl, I felt like we were “in the middle of nowhere,” driving on a dirt road to our house. My husband built our house pretty much on his own, doing all the construction, electrical, plumbing, etc., himself, despite not having any formal training.

Usually, the sun would be out during the day enough to charge our solar panels, and it would rain at night to fill up the water tank. It was pitch black at night, because we lived in an area where there weren't any street lamps off the main highway. My husband grew up on a dairy farm in MI and had to teach this city girl some country ways; it was very “Green Acres”!



We collected eggs from chickens, planted fruit trees and vegetables. During that time, we also welcomed our daughter, Diana, who was born in May 2014.

When I moved to Hawaii, the public schools were starting to put preschool classrooms on their campuses. I opened and ran one of these classrooms for 6 years, following Montessori philosophy within the parameters set by a public school. I was fortunate to receive very generous funding, and able to purchase Montessori materials for the children. It was very different than working at WSMS, and I learned a lot about how systems work in the public sector. I took advantage of professional development opportunities to learn about Hawaiian culture, history, music, and language, becoming more informed and experienced about things like hula, poi pounding, and flora and fauna.

In June 2017, we returned to the mainland to Grand Rapids, MI. I am back in a Montessori school that serves infants through middle school. My daughter attends the school, and is in the classroom next door to me. We are able to see our relatives more regularly now.

Even though the school I work at now is an independent Montessori school, nothing can compare to the support and resources that exist at a school like WSMS! Working at other schools, and seeing other Montessori schools as a member of AMS on-site accreditation visiting teams, I have learned how unique WSMS really is.

While I lived in Hawaii, I connected with the only Montessori Teacher Education Program in the state at Chaminade University of Honolulu. I still work as an instructor in the program during the summer, and my daughter gets to come along with me. It keeps us bonded to Hawaii. Diana loves to go to the beach, read books about Hawaii, listen to Hawaiian music, and “dance” the hula. We also return to New York every summer to visit my family. And, of course, we stop by WSMS to see everyone, too!

## SUSANNE PEEBLES

**Susanne Peebles arrived at WSMS in 1983 as an Associate Teacher in 2E. At the time, she was completing her MA in Early Childhood Education at NYU, specializing in Montessori education, and training under Marlene Barron, Mimi’s predecessor as head of WSMS.**



**She soon became Head Teacher in 1Wpm, then moved to 2E and 4E. She took on the role of Mentor Teacher in 1990, added office projects to her responsibilities, and became Associate Head of School in 1992. One of her biggest challenges at WSMS was overseeing the summer 1995 renovation of the Garden and first floors while Marlene was teaching in England. Keeping the architect and construction crew on deadline was very different from her multiple academic tasks!**

I left WSMS in April 1996. After six months at Jacobi Medical Center, as a classroom teacher with four- and five-year-olds in their day care center for children with HIV, I became Direc-

tor of Preschool Admissions at Brooklyn Heights Montessori School (BHMS).

Much like WSMS, BHMS was started in the mid-1960’s by parents, and initially served 20 three-to-five-year-olds in a church basement classroom. Over time the school expanded its program, and the first class of eighth graders graduated in 2001. After several moves, space acquisitions and renovations, the school now serves approximately 270 students, and has a library, a learning kitchen, a state-of-the-art performance space, an expanded terrace garden, a common space for community gatherings, roof play space for the Lower School, an outdoor classroom and a large turf-covered outdoor space for all grades.

I became Director of the Preschool (2s and 3-6 programs) in 1999, while continuing my role in Admissions. Director of Financial Aid was added to my responsibilities in 2000. My admissions and financial aid roles were passed along to the newly established Admissions Office in 2002.

In 2013 the school underwent a major reorganization of responsibilities, and I was appointed Head of the Lower School, with responsibility for the 2s, 3-6, and 6-9 programs.

I learned so much from my experiences at WSMS and put every aspect of it into my different roles at BHMS, including how to register the school for a BEDS [NYS Basic Educational Data System] number in order to support the transition from classroom-based libraries to the establishment of a school library, establishing the toddler (2s) program, developing a Mentor Program for new employees, establishing bi-weekly meetings with all teaching teams, and so much more.

I have fond memories of WSMS, and still have many precious photos and letters from families and children. I loved the teaching staff. Many of my closest friends are former and current WSMS people, including Marlene, Barbara Myszak, Barbara Reilly, Windy Wellington, Ron Sopyla, Susan Flexner, Judy Ralston, Lynn Vogel, and Elspeth MacDonald (I still see her once in a while!). I run into Joan Shisler, Melissa and Margot Mack, and Marcia Polanco at conferences, and keep tabs on Barbara Grant and Patricia Dawkins via social media. WSMS truly shaped my life and prepared me well for all the things I have done since.





**SAVE  
THE  
DATES**

## **WSMS AUCTION 2020 TO BENEFIT THE FINANCIAL AID PROGRAM**

Bringing the entire community of families, faculty and staff together to celebrate & support a critically important part of our mission.

**Friday, January 31, 2020 | 7:30PM–12:30AM | The Edison Ballroom**

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## **THE 5TH ANNUAL ALUMNI FAMILIES COCKTAIL PARTY**

Whether you're a parent of a former WSMS student, or a former WSMS student ready for happy hour with old friends, join us to reminisce and reconnect with your beloved community of fellow alumni.

**Thursday, April 23, 2020 | 6:30–8:00PM | West Side Montessori School**

## ALUMNI NOTES

As submitted by alumnae parents. We'd love to hear from you! Please share alumni notes with Sarah Eson, [seson@wsmsnyc.org](mailto:seson@wsmsnyc.org).

### Ian and Eric Del Balso

'72  
'74

Thankfully we are all well, and think back fondly to our days at WSMS. We are so grateful for the community spirit which emanated from our days on the UWS. We still happily live in NYC, enjoying the abundance of cultural offerings which are close at hand, but more and more we are spending time in our CA home, which is very near Ian, Eric and their families. Our granddaughters are 4, 6 and 8 years old, and they are the light of our lives. We all recently vacationed together in Mexico.

### Chris Leon

'82

Chris still lives in NYC, now on Strivers' Row in Harlem, with his partner, Tina Stege, their three children, Kiep ('08), Malolae ('10) and Koonal ('14), and various other regular or occasional visitors, including Judy, Chris's mom and co-owner of their house, and many relatives of Tina's from the Marshall Islands. Chris is an Engineering Manager at Google, and Tina is an environmental activist. After WSMS, Kiep and Malo moved to the PS 84 dual language (French) program. After a year at WSMS, Koonal also moved to PS 84.

### Matt Leon

'84

Matt recently moved back east after 18 years in the Pacific Northwest with his wife, Corinne Hansch, their three children—Sam (2006), Oak (2007) and Rosie (2012)—and four cats. Matt and Corinne were successful organic vegetable and flower farmers in Mendocino County for six years, before deciding to relocate to the Leon family property, Strawberry Fields, in Amsterdam, NY. Their Lovin' Mama Farm has quickly become a popular and successful stand at the Troy and Schenectady markets, and with local chefs. Their farm is an example of regenerative agriculture – organic, no-till – that keeps more carbon in the soil. Their kids are home-schooled.

### Kirsten Leon

'86

Kristen has settled in Washington Depot, CT, with her partner, Shane Mongar, and their two sons, Curtis ('11) and Oliver ('13). Kirsten is Senior Company Manager for Pilobolus, a dance company founded in 1971. She has worked in the dance world since college, including touring with Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo. Shane runs an independent production company, and tours with bands, including The National and Death Cab for Cutie. Curtis and Oliver are both at Washington Montessori School.

### Kate Brokaw

'90

Kate graduated from Brearley and Pomona, lives in LA, and recently started editing film and TV.

### Tess Brokaw

'95

Tess graduated from Brearley and The New School, and lives in Manhattan.

### Sam Mellins

'03

After graduating from Hunter College High School in June 2015, Sam spent a gap year at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem. In September 2016, he began at the University of Chicago, where he is a rising fourth year, with a major in History.

## QUOTES FROM THE 2019 ALUMNI FAMILIES COCKTAIL PARTY

*What I remember most about WSMS is...*

"The teachers' warm smiles."

"My daughter loved WSMS so much that she said that when she has children, they will go to WSMS and have Katherine in 3E, and she will introduce them to Mimi."

"Mimi greeting the children at the bottom of the stairs."

"The thrill of learning that is in the very WSMS ether: continents, handwriting, counting with golden beads, the music, the friendships that last a lifetime."

"The last day of school when the kids sing songs."

"Knowing all the planets in the solar system, the entire digestive system, how to make guacamole and resolve conflicts – before kindergarten! There is no better place."

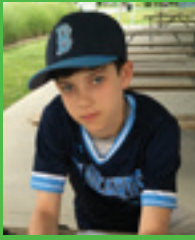
'06



### Natalie Near

Natalie Near, now 16, attended WSMS and had an amazing experience. Since that time, she has been enrolled in several honors programs, made the Dean's list, and participated in school volunteer activities. She attended PS 24 in Riverdale and Saint Gabriel Catholic School in Riverdale, and currently she is attending Notre Dame High School in NYC. She is bright, compassionate, humble and well-directed in her plans to become a doctor. Thank you for starting her down the right path.

'11



### Eli Gitter-Dentz

Eli Gitter-Dentz, an eighth grade student at Hunter High School, was invited to apply for the Broadcom MASTERS competition after placing among the top 10% of participants at Hunter's science fair. His project was "The Effects of Garlic and Allspice on Bacterial Growth." Eli also pitches for his baseball travel team, the Bluebirds.

'12



### Nika Pekarsky

Nika is now in seventh grade, and is continuing her figure skating career at Ice House, in Hackensack, NJ. She also studies Chinese, plays violin, and enjoys painting. We all miss WSMS!

'10



### Alexandra Otilia Chitu

Alexandra Otilia Chitu is now a sophomore in Eastchester High School, planning to become a musician and marine biologist. She trained in classical ballet, and has performed in a number of shows, including *The Nutcracker* at Purchase College in 2011 and 2012. In 2012 she discovered a new passion – playing the flute – and became totally immersed in it. She has won multiple “outstanding” certificates from the New York State School Music Association, and two state certificates of excellence from the Royal Conservatory of Music. This spring she won a gold medal in the Golden Key International Music Festival 2019, and played in the Winners Recital at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall.

'11



### Sahil Siddiqi

Sahil is in the eighth grade at PS 333, Manhattan School for Children, and was recently inducted into the National Junior Honor Society. He is a thinker, a drummer, a swimmer, and a budding guitarist, and still devours comic books, just like at WSMS.

'13



### Caroline Lindemann

The hills are alive with the sound of music! Caroline played the role of Brigitta von Trapp in *The Sound of Music* production with Truthbase Theatricals this past June. She was introduced to this musical by her WSMS teacher, Katherine Fordney, who would sing these tunes in full Broadway voice to the children, and taught these wee little preschoolers, "... these are a few of my favorite things." Caroline came home after a day of singing with her class, and asked that we purchase the soundtrack, which we have now played for years in our home. We know that Caroline received this incredible opportunity because of the amazing teachers she had in her early formative years, like Katherine. We are ever thankful for WSMS.

'11



### Alex Stephan

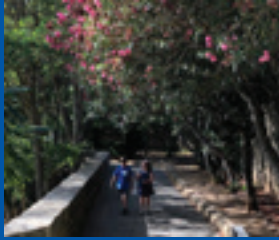
Alex is heading into sixth grade at BASIS Independent Manhattan. He is excited to start at his new school! Alex is a junior black belt in karate, and on the hockey team at Chelsea Piers.



'14

### Peter Stephan

Peter has started fourth grade at PS 199. He loves coding and his summer camp, Deerkill Day Camp.



'16  
'18



Leighton Heilbut ('18) and Jackson Heilbut ('16) had a wonderful summer traveling to Spain!



'18

### Ohemaa Pratt

Ohemaa Pratt is excited to be starting first grade in September after an exhausting summer of park-hopping; she visited at least ten new parks this summer. Her favorite trip, however, and a first for our family, was a hiking trip in upstate NY. Hiking allowed Ohemaa to continue nature exploration in ways she was unable to do in the city. She saw a real live snake slithering away under a nearby hammock and followed butterflies in the field. She even told me she spotted an eagle (unconfirmed!). It was a wonderful summer!



'15  
'17

Nate Lasher ('15), Jonathan Tieng ('17), and Santosh Bair ('15) at the top two boards in the fourth round of the citywide scholastic chess tournament!



'17

### Max Pekarsky

Max is now in second grade. Max's hobbies are chess and soccer. His chess team won second place at National Elementary Championships in May, and he scores many goals on a Manhattan Soccer Club travel team.



'17

### Leo Slabin

Leo finished first grade at Browning in the spring of 2019. He has taken up an interest in chess: he was a co-champion in the NY City tournament, and traveled to Saratoga for the NYS Scholastic Championship and to Nashville for the National Elementary Championship. He also enjoys karate, basketball and soccer.



'16

### Sienna Slabin

Sienna is in third grade at Chapin. Outside of school, she enjoys both tennis and swimming. Sienna was super excited to attend sleep away camp for the first time this summer.



'19

### Chauncey and Ruby Lodhi

Chauncey and Ruby spent the summer going on NYC adventures with their brother Henry, in NJ with grandparents, and vacationing at the beach, where they caught 19 kingfish and a fluke! In July, the Lodhi family moved to Westchester, and the kids now spend their days biking, swimming, gardening, and setting up their new house!

# NEWS FROM WSMS-TEP

We are proud to announce that WSMS-TEP will be offering the Montessori Inclusion Endorsement (MIE) beginning in January. The MIE program is designed for Montessori teachers who already hold a recognized Montessori credential and seek knowledge and skills to fully integrate an inclusive classroom model that meets the needs of students with disabilities. The endorsement incorporates Montessori practices while recognizing and honoring the needs of children with learning differences.

Courses will be held primarily online, as well as for six days at West Side Montessori School in the summer. The program is estimated to be completed in 18 months. It consists of an academic phase and a 16-week practicum phase in an inclusive classroom setting. Upon completion, candidates will receive the American Montessori Society (AMS) Montessori Inclusion Endorsement.

Maria Montessori had a rich history of working to support

diverse learners, including children with varying disabilities at the Orthophrenic School in Rome. Through her studies, she saw learning differences in children and spoke of the need to follow all children through techniques of observation and assessment. The information gathered was then analyzed in order to plan for individualized instruction to meet the needs of individual children.

Katherine (Fordney) Schneider (3Wpm Head Teacher) is the coordinator for our Montessori Inclusion Endorsement Program. Her role includes guiding aspiring teachers, course and curriculum development, and course instruction. Katherine received her AMS Early Childhood certification from Midwest Montessori Teacher Training Center (Evanston, IL), and completed her MS Ed in Early Childhood Special and General Education at Bank Street College. Katherine is passionate about working with children with disabilities, as well as instructing teachers to work in Montessori inclusion environments.

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## FROM DC TO SHANGHAI: SHARING OUR EXPERTISE

In March thirty members of the WSMS faculty and administration attended the annual American Montessori Society (AMS) Conference in Washington, DC. The conference was an opportunity to join peers from Montessori schools across the nation and around the world, attend keynote addresses by eminent speakers, and participate in literally hundreds of workshops across a spectrum of topics.

We were well-represented. Mimi Basso, Head of School, and Karen Deinzer, Twos Program Coordinator, presented “The First 1,000 Days”—a workshop targeting Infant and Toddler teachers, which shared the developmental pathways of very young children, and our experiences in the Twos Program.

In another workshop, Lisanne Pinciotti, WSMS-TEP Program Director, addressed teacher educators on “Incorporating Online Learning into Your Teacher Education Program”—an area TEP has incorporated to enhance learning opportunities for students, based on her work as co-chair of the Online Learning Taskforce for AMS.

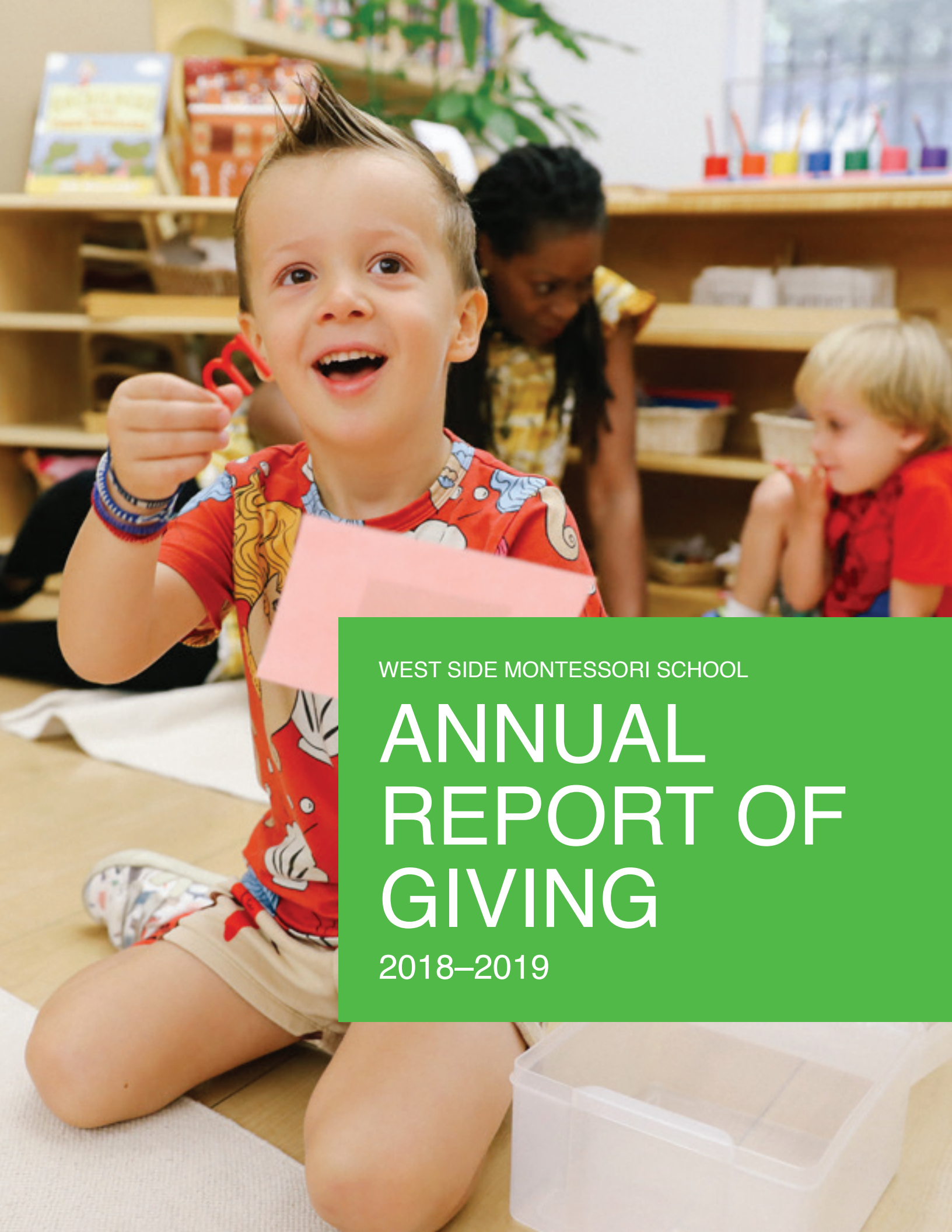
In June, Mimi, Karen and Lisanne headed to China for the annual Montessori Conference Shanghai (MCSH). This year’s theme was “Cosmic Education”: Maria Montessori’s terminology for the path through which children develop a global vision.



*Mimi Basso, Lisanne Pinciotti and Karen Deinzer presenting in Shanghai.*

Mimi’s workshop was “Building and Nurturing Relationships with Infants and Toddlers,” Karen’s was “Inspiring Curiosity and Wonder with Infants and Toddlers,” and Lisanne presented “Nurturing Curiosity, Empathy and Compassion: The Cosmic Approach in Early Childhood.”

Twenty-nine students, 26 of whom were administrators, took WSMS-TEP Infant Toddler training in Shanghai this year with Karen Deinzer and Maria Rosado. Next stop: Russia! Lisanne is working with one of the WSMS-TEP Administrator students to establish an additional location for Early Childhood training in Moscow next year.

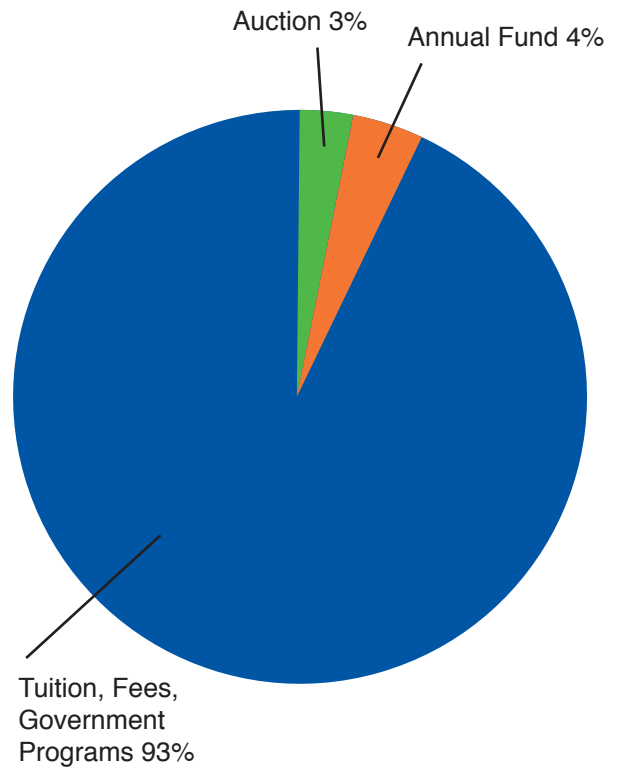


WEST SIDE MONTESSORI SCHOOL

# ANNUAL REPORT OF GIVING

2018–2019

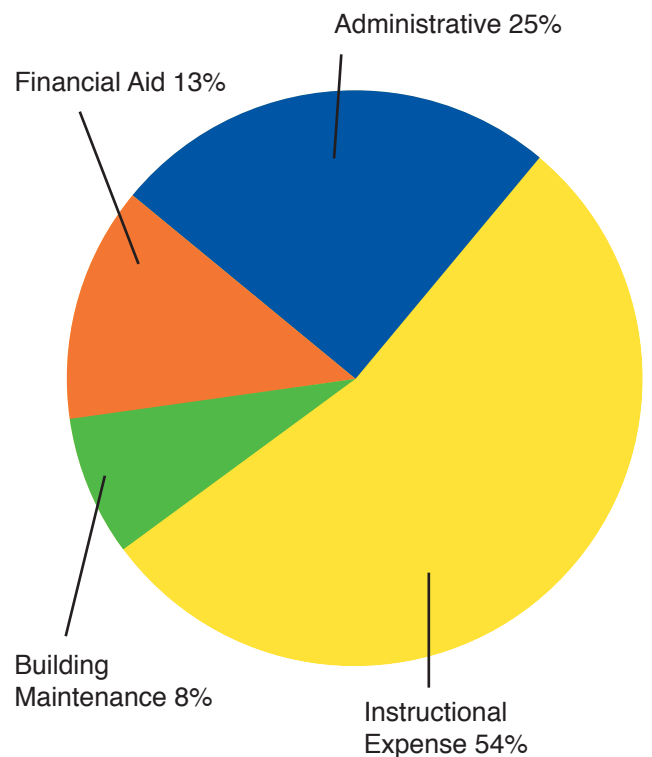
## 2018–2019 REVENUE



## FUNDRAISING RESULTS 2018–2019

ANNUAL FUND	\$364,648
AUCTION	\$261,700
FALL FESTIVAL	\$8,900
<hr/>	
<b>TOTAL RAISED</b>	<b>\$635,248</b>

## 2018–2019 OPERATING EXPENSES



# THE WSMS ANNUAL FUND

The 2018–2019 Annual Fund was an astronomical success! Together, our community exceeded our financial goal and achieved over 80% current parent participation.

Our first-ever Annual Fund Week in March blasted off with a rocket ship theme, complete with the launch of hand-made rocket ships created by each classroom. *Every class* achieved a participation “booster donation” graciously funded by Mimi and Bob Basso, which fueled an additional \$5,500 to the Annual Fund and propelled the ships higher into space. A heartfelt thank you to all

who participated. The rocket launch was a supernova-sized success because of your spirit, generosity and dedication to WSMS, a school and a community like no other.

We also introduced our first-ever Grandparents and Special Friends Annual Fund Book Drive which raised funds for books in the library and throughout the classrooms. All proceeds raised through this initiative were used solely for the purchase of books at school. Thank you to the more than 50 grandparents and special friends of WSMS students who participated! These funds have already

made a big difference in funding our beautiful library for children.

Contributions to the Annual Fund from current parents, alumni families, grandparents, trustees, faculty, staff and friends make a world of difference in enabling WSMS to be the special school and diverse community we love and value. Each and every gift, no matter the size, has made an important impact on the exceptional level of early education WSMS is able to provide. We are grateful to each and every one of you for your support.





## DONOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

Each fall our Parents Association (PA) hits the ground running! Returning parents take the lead and warmly encourage new families to get involved. The PA provides the best balance of tried-and-true activities with openness to creative new ideas. Some are just for fun, some are for fundraising and fun, and all are great ways to forge new and lasting friendships while making a difference.

Thank you to the 2018–2019 PA Co-Chairs Mary Pat Dowhy and Tenille Skelton for their inspirational leadership, and to each and every one of the names listed below who devoted precious time to make this a wonderful year for families and children. Seeing the WSMS community come together on so many occasions is a reminder of just how unique our school community is.



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# WSMS

West Side Montessori School

Founded in 1963

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(WSMS)

Note: **Bold** indicates committee chair

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