

SARA BLOOMBERG



Central to Dr. Montessori's approach to education was that children are inherently innocent and unbiased, open to exploring differences in many ways. We have embedded this in our commitment to DEIB, in part by ensuring that the books available to children represent our diverse community. But sometimes we forget

that diversity is broader than race or ethnicity.

Sara Bloomberg was a teacher at WSMS from 1996 to 2004 (and a strong influence on Bat-Or Rosenberg, as indicated in her sidebar!). Since leaving WSMS, Sara has maintained their commitment to Montessori education. Sara was a founding director of Battery Park Montessori School, was the Head of the Early Childhood Division of the St Augustine Public Montessori School. Sara is a member of the AMS Board of Directors and is Chair of Member Engagement and the LG-BTQIA+ Affinity Group. Sara is a co-founder of Blossoming Beyond the Binary, a consulting company that focuses on helping schools to create environments that are LGBTQIA+ positive and that promote Gender Diversity and Equity. Sara has served as a field consultant and math instructor for WSMS-TEP, Duhovkha, CGMS and VMAT. Sara names Marlene Barron, Mimi's predecessor as Head of School, as an ongoing mentor and friend.

Sara sees their work as an LGBTQIA+ presenter, author and activist as addressing the sometimes obscured gender facet of DEIB work. Sara collaborates with educators and families to help children (and adults) explore their own identities, as well as understand and accept varying gender identities and explorations by others. Sara quotes Dr. Montessori's words as a reminder of the importance of examining ourselves: "We insist...that a teacher must prepare themselves interiorly by systematically studying themselves so that they can tear out their most deeply rooted defects, those in fact which impede their relations with children. In order to discover these subconscious failings, we need a special kind of instruction. We must see ourselves as another sees us. We must be willing to accept guidance if we wish to become effective teachers." (Dr. Maria Montessori, *The Secret of Childhood*, p. 182-183)

Sara lauds WSMS for our inclusive mission and website. Sara recommended a few books to read with our children, and then give them space to reflect. It turns out we already have them in our classrooms and library!

Books on gender identity:

Jacob's New Dress by Sarah Hoffman

Julian is a Mermaid by Jessica Love

Not All Princesses Dress In Pink by Jane Yolen

Lucia the Luchadora by Cynthia Leonar Garza

Sparkle Boy by Leslea Newman

The Boy and the Bindi by Vivek Shraya

Introducing Teddy by Jessica Walton

From the Stars in the Sky to the Fish in the Sea by Kai Cheng Thom

Meet Polkadot by Talcott Broadhead

I Am Jazz by Jessica Herthel

A House For Everyone by Jo Hinst

The Gender Wheel by Maya Christina Gonzalez

WSMS-TEP ROSE TO THE CHALLENGES

By: Mimi Basso

Like every other organization, WSMS-TEP (the WSMS Teacher Education Program) had to adapt its traditional approach to providing Montessori training in 2020-2021.

This began with the summer of 2020. Usually, TEP provides instruction to beginning Montessori teachers in the WSMS gym, Demas Hall at the Greek Orthodox Church, and Metropolitan Montessori (for Elementary). TEP holds in-person classes across a spectrum of cohorts (Infant Toddler, Early Childhood, Elementary, Administrator, and the Inclusion Endorsement). With the March 2020 closing of the WSMS facility, and the summer transformation of the gym into two classrooms, this was not going to happen!

Lisanne Pinciotti, Director of WSMS-TEP, and her incredibly talented crew, did a quick pivot. They were able to run all of their many programs remotely, despite having to re-design nearly every aspect for virtual/remote participation. They discovered that students actually needed more support, but also that seeing their students in their own environments, rather than on site at WSMS, was a major benefit. Ms. Pinciotti praised the TEP faculty as supportive models to their students: flexible, cheerful and realistic.





Another critical thing WSMS-TEP did this year was re-connect to TEP's history by establishing the Roslyn D. Williams Memorial Scholarship, which celebrates the founder of CHAMP (Central Harlem Association of Montessori Parents), the organization which evolved into WSMS-TEP. Williams' goal was to prepare parents to actively participate in their children's education and to expand the pool of Montessori teachers. CHAMP was established in 1967, and was the first Black-founded Montessori training program in the country. WSMS faculty and administrators taught at CHAMP in the early years, and in 1994 CHAMP moved to WSMS and was renamed WSMS-TEP. The Roslyn D. Williams Memorial Scholarship will be offered annually to a student who applies and identifies as Black/African-American.

Equally important, last year saw the incorporation of ABAR (anti-bias, anti-racism) into the TEP curricula, consistent with WSMS's focus on DEIB (diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging) in the children's learning. Martha Haakmat, former Head of School at Brooklyn Heights Montessori, has worked closely with faculty and administrators for both TEP and WSMS, through workshops and consulting, to ensure that current and future teachers and administrators integrate ABAR/DEIB awareness into their classroom experiences.

The TEP summer 2021 program was three weeks virtual, three weeks in person (the gym was converted back to its previous open space). Ms. Pinciotti anticipates expanding national options, adding faculty from other Montessori schools and students from public schools, and creating professional development opportunities for graduates and online workshops that could bring in people who are not TEP students, among other things. She is deeply grateful for the partnership with, and support of, WSMS.

And WSMS is deeply grateful to Lisanne Pinciotti and her team for their efforts in meeting the challenges of the past year, and for the enormous impact TEP has in preparing teachers and making our school—and many others—so much stronger and more successful.

BACK IN THE CLASSROOM



Bat-Or Rosenberg, currently a senior at Touro College, had a gig this summer as a student teacher in 2W with Latisa, Margot and Miranda.

But it wasn't her first time in a WSMS classroom: she was a student here in her early childhood days, and a member of the very first LAP class. When the 2W campers found this out, they were shocked and awed!

Bat-Or has fond memories of teachers, like Sara Bloomberg and Marcia Polanco. And she remembers classroom activities, going to the roof (which seems much smaller now!) to play games, and the warm and endearing environment.

Bat-Or has worked with young children since she was 15, and her goal is to be a child psychologist in a community-based organization that supports families. She has realized that the best way to learn about children is to observe them, that kids approach the world differently than adults do. Adults see things as concrete; kids are open to radically different ways to explore and learn. When one step doesn't satisfy their curiosity or need, they willingly take another approach: for example, stirring in a new color of paint or sharing their interest with a friend.

Bat-Or describes herself as a visual learner, but sees the importance of sensual learning and how it helps children grasp concepts. Perhaps that started at WSMS? Maybe she'll even find her way back to WSMS in a few years with her psychology credentials to work with teachers and parents, and conduct workshops in child development!

