

 WSMS

Great Beginnings

West Side Montessori School

2021 | WSMSNYC.ORG



NOW HIRING

WSMS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

West Side Montessori School, an independent preschool on Manhattan’s Upper West Side, founded in 1963, seeks an experienced fundraising professional to serve as the School’s first Development Officer.

West Side Montessori School

West Side Montessori School (WSMS) serves a diverse group of nearly 200 learners ages 2 – 6 years and their 180 families. The School prepares children to be independent, life-long learners ready to take their next educational steps at a wide variety of independent and public schools.

The School also operates an internationally recognized Teacher Education Program (WSMS-TEP) leading to Montessori certification at the infant and toddler, early childhood, elementary, and administrator levels, as well as the endorsement in Montessori Inclusion. WSMS-TEP also partners with Manhattanville College to offer Masters Degree and New York State teacher Certification programs.

The School has an annual budget of \$9,000,000 and has raised an average of \$650,000 from parents, grandparents, and alumni families in each of the past three years thanks to the hard work and dedication of committed and energetic groups of volunteers whose work has been overseen by the Board’s Development Committee.

More information about WSMS and WSMS-TEP may be found at www.wsmsnyc.org.

The Position

The Development Officer will be responsible for developing and leading a full fundraising program: the unrestricted annual fund, restricted giving for operations and endowment, events, and, potentially, a capital campaign in the next several years. This full-time position reports directly to the Head of School, serves as a member of the senior administrative team, and works closely with the Development Committee and the Board of Trustees.

Requirements

- Minimum 3 – 5 years fundraising/events experience
- An entrepreneurial and team-oriented spirit
- Ability to work independently as a self-starter
- A desire to work with and harness the energy of dedicated teams of volunteers
- A commitment to the mission and values of West Side Montessori School
- At minimum, a BA degree
- A sense of humor

An Equal Opportunity Employer, West Side Montessori School seeks candidates who will add to the diversity of its school community. More than this, WSMS is expressly committed to becoming an anti-racist institution and calls on all members of its community to join in this important work. Interested candidates should send a resume as well as a cover letter outlining their readiness for this position to Mimi Basso, Head of School (mbasso@wsmsnyc.org).

Great Beginnings

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WEST SIDE MONTESSORI SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES 2021–2022

- | | |
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| Iva Mills, <i>President</i> | Nigel-Ann La Qua |
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| Mary Pat Dowhy | Liz Martorella, |
| Victoria Feltman | <i>Parent Representative</i> |
| Joseph Gilbert | Christina Wang, |
| Steven Han | <i>Parent Representative</i> |
| Natasha Kazmi | Kira Walker, |
| Lilian Kim | <i>Faculty Representative</i> |

IN MIMI'S VOICE

Dear families and friends of WSMS,

Whew!

It has been quite a year, and I am happy to tell you that we made it through with flying colors.

There were a lot of challenges, not the least of which was accommodating the DOH/DOE-imposed mandates on reduced class size, distancing, mask-wearing and hyper-sanitizing.

With the expertise of a WSMS parent, skilled in creating museum displays, we transformed the gym into two beautiful, light and airy classrooms. We installed plastic barriers in public spaces, set up outside arrival and departure procedures, cleaned and cleaned and cleaned some more! My deep gratitude to Amy Stoney, Shawn Cumberbatch, Vance Gordian and Keith Alston for making this happen.

We followed the protocols of isolating each classroom pod, not allowing any adults other than employees in the building, children saying goodbye to their families at the front door, and everyone wearing masks—it was amazing how easily the children adapted to that! All employees tested weekly for COVID and all were vaccinated by July 1!

Over the year we had only two incidents where a classroom went to remote learning. And our teachers were well prepared. During the summer, a talented group of teachers and administrators created “A Montessori Guide to Zoom Learning” (ex-



cerpted in last year's *Great Beginnings*). Our goal was to provide a Montessori, differentiated, hands-on, remote learning experience for children when necessary. Our teachers provided another exceptional year for our children, whether in the classroom or at home on Zoom.

The PA quickly realized there could be no traditional Auction this year, and they responded in a wonderful, creative and *MAGIC* way! I could not be more impressed or more grateful to the many volunteers who stepped up to this challenge. Thank you for your very generous support of our fundraising. Our participation rate (97%) was truly incredible!

I am filled with gratitude. Teachers, administrators, board members, and parents were wonderful partners in this very extraordinary year.

Finally, I am happy to share with you a summary of our 2021-2023 Strategic Plan. The school's families and leaders undertook a strategic planning process beginning in 2019. We looked carefully at concrete ways to improve the life of the child at WSMS, fortify our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, and, then, how to navigate the unexpected in the face of COVID-19.

Stay well!

Mimi Basso
Mimi Basso
Head of School

BOARD NEWS



A LETTER FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Dear WSMS community,

Last year at this time we managed to reopen the school with lots of new protocols in place, and we were hopeful that things would go well. Happily, they did ... though it was certainly a very different year than what we have experienced in the past.

There are so many people to thank for getting us safely through the year. Key, of course, is our phenomenal Head of School, Mimi Basso, whose confidence and decisive leadership inspired her awesome team to address the issues from every perspective: the highest quality education, in the safest possible facilities, with the strongest financial support. Our faculty maintained their goals for every child, while holding our values, ethics and kindness at the center of all that they steward. Although the gym was beautifully converted into two inspiring classrooms, our teachers took the opportunity to expand outdoor learning opportunities which the children *really* enjoyed.

I want to thank my fellow Board members for their steadfast leadership and commitment to WSMS, and the PA Co-Chairs, Liz Martorella and Gillian Weindling, for maintaining the fabric and identity of our community at a time when safety requirements kept us apart. Our dedicated PA creatively re-imagined annual fundraising as *WSMS Gives* and, as you will see, our community responded with care and extraordinary generosity.

With my deepest thanks to all of you, for all you have done and will do, and my continuing best wishes for your health and safety.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Iva".

Iva Mills
President, Board of Trustees
(Dashiell and Morgan, '16)

2021-2022 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.

Iva Mills,
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 grew up in San Diego, CA, and 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 is also a Trustee of Trinity School, serves on the Acquisition Committee of the Studio Museum in Harlem, and previously served as a Trustee of Safe Horizon.



Myles Amend,
Vice 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 research, and banking. Tim holds a Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) designation and serves as a director on several for-profit boards, and previously on the College Board of Advisors and in the Admission Ambassador program for Georgetown University. Tim graduated in 1992 from Georgetown University where he was a Baker Scholar.



**Mort Haque,
Treasurer**

Mort Haque is a Partner and 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, both WSMS graduates. 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 non-profit 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 are the proud parents of two WSMS alumni, Nami (WSMS '17) and Emi (WSMS '21).



Nadine Carroll

Nadine Carroll currently serves as the Academic Dean and an 8th grade math teacher at De La Salle Academy, the only private, independent middle school in New York City for academically talented and economically less advantaged children. Nadine is responsible for faculty development, communicating with parents, and supporting the academic needs of all students. Nadine has extensive experience in education starting with her work as a Center Director in 2001 for a Kaplan Educational Center, to her role as a 5th grade teacher and Lower School Chair at George Jackson Academy, where she worked for 10 years. Nadine received a BA in Sociology from Emory University, and a Master's in Childhood Education from Bank Street College of Education, and is deeply committed

to the work of supporting the academic and social needs of all children. Nadine is the mother of two current WSMS students, and married to Jimmy Carroll.



Nikki Chase-Levin

Nikki Chase-Levin is a returning board member and former parent who served as the WSMS Events Director for five years. A graduate of Michigan State University with a BA in Journalism, Nikki's 25-year marketing career started at an entertainment publicity firm in Los Angeles in 1995, and continues here in New York City. Nikki has worked for some of the most recognizable consumer brands in the marketplace, including *Captain Morgan Original Spiced Rum*, *Sony*, *Morgan Stanley*, *Discover Card* and *Miller Brewing Company*. Her responsibilities included strategic planning for new and existing products, television advertising development, marketing communications, public relations programming and event planning. As the co-founder and president of Straight Line Marketing, Inc.—her independent consulting firm—she has counseled clients such as *Pepsi*, *Smirnoff*, *Discovery Networks*, and the lifestyle marketing agency, *MKTG*. Nikki and her husband Dave are the proud parents of Max (WSMS '14), Zach (WSMS '16), and two 70-pound labs ... Bubbles & Rocket!



Mary Pat Dowhy

Mary Pat Dowhy and her wife, Donna Canfield, are the proud parents of Pierce, a 2020 WSMS graduate! Mary Pat served for two years as co-president of the WSMS Parents Association, where she had the privilege of working alongside the dedicated families and administrators of this wonderful school on so many of its key initiatives, including the Auction, the Fall Festival and the Admissions Committee. Mary Pat received her BA from Fordham University and spent more than a decade working as a performer in theater, before moving to Los Angeles to continue her career in film and television. She returned to New York to accept a position with a strategic marketing firm, 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 championed LGBTQ rights, including marriage equality. Mary Pat is happy and grateful to continue serving WSMS as a trustee alongside such valued friends and community members.



Victoria Feltman

Victoria Feltman is a nutritionist who specializes in family and childhood nutrition. Vicky is the Director of Partnerships and Programming at Green Beetz, a food and environmental education non-profit that provides a ready-to-teach curriculum to educators. In addition to her work with Green Beetz, Vicky teaches Food & Culture at Hudson County Community College in Jersey City, NJ, and counsels patients at a pediatrician's office in Manhattan. 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 in history from Cornell and an MS in nutrition from NYU. Vicky and her husband are the parents of George (WSMS '16), Oliver (WSMS '19) and Simon (WSMS '21).



Joseph Gilbert

Joseph Gilbert is married to Damaris Hernandez and is the father of Mariana and Ollie, both proud WSMS alumni. 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.



Steven Han

Steven Han is a Portfolio Manager at Quent Capital, an equities fund focused on global, small cap investments, as well as a co-founder at Sypher Capital, a special opportunities fund. Over the last 20 years, Steven has been an investor and advisor, primarily in the technology sector. Prior to his current roles, Steven worked across public equities, private equity, and management consulting. Steven holds a BA from Stanford University and an MBA from Northwestern University. Steven and his wife, Gee Young Lee, currently live on the Upper West Side. They

have been active travelers over the years and have lived in eight cities between the two of them. Their daughter, Lina Han, graduated from WSMS in 2021.



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.



Lilian Kim

Lilian Kim and her husband, Scott Kim, are proud parents of Grayson (Collegiate, 4th grade) and Taylor (Brearley, Kindergarten). Lilian is a native of Los Angeles, and also lived in San Francisco for over a decade. Lilian has been an active parent volunteer, serving as co-chair of the Auction Committee, a volunteer on the Annual Fund Committee, and a member of the Admissions Committee, and she was active in various projects on the decor of WSMS. Lilian received her BFA of Merchandising and Design at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco. Prior to taking time off to raise her family, she worked in various roles at Gap, Inc., focused on merchandising and production. Currently, Lilian designs a line of children's clothing and accessories, in addition to working as a production stylist.



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 working from the Columbia Startup Lab to develop her own

tech company. Nigel-Ann 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. She also advises the ad hoc Real Estate Committee for Grand St. Settlement, and is an enthusiastic volunteer at the Hewitt School and Hillsong Church. Nigel-Ann and her husband, Marco Williamson, are proud parents of two WSMS alumni, Ayn and Adi Williamson, and Asa, who is excited to start at WSMS in 2022.



Scott Li

Scott Li is a managing director with CRG, a healthcare-focused investment firm that has committed over \$4 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 also 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; they co-chaired the WSMS Bulb Planting and Vern co-chaired the Fall Festival. A New Jersey native and long-time resident of New York, Scott lives on the Upper West Side with his family, which includes both an alum and a current student at WSMS. He received an AB in economics from Princeton University and an MBA from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.



Marguerite McNicoll

Marguerite McNicoll and her husband Iain were delighted to join the WSMS community when their older son (Miles '20) started in the Multi-Age Program. Their younger son Henry thrived in the Twos last year, and they are thrilled that they have two more years of daily pick-ups and drop-offs to spend time with the wonderful WSMS community. Marguerite grew up in Northern California, attended Deerfield Academy, and received a BA from NYU. She started her real estate career managing a large portfolio of residential properties along the Upper West Side and Chelsea, before transitioning to broker with the Corcoran Group. She has served on the Executive Committee of Deerfield, and is currently a director on her co-op Board. She chaired

the recent PS 166 Book Fair, was co-chair of WSMS's Hooked on Books, a member of the Admissions Committee, and a class rep. She has actively volunteered with Auctions and Fall Festivals. She is thrilled to continue serving WSMS and to help further its important legacy.



Kurt Miller

Kurt Miller and his wife Melissa are happy to have been part of the WSMS community since 2015. They are parents of one current WSMS student and one WSMS alumni. Over the years, Kurt has had the pleasure of serving as Auction co-chair once, as well as volunteering at the Auction and Fall Festival multiple times. Originally from northern Virginia, he moved west for undergrad at Stanford. After graduation, he taught English in Japan for a year before pursuing a PhD in Computer Science at UC Berkeley. He and Melissa moved to NYC in 2011 for Kurt's job at PDT Partners, a quantitative asset management firm. From 2014–2018, Kurt was also an adjunct at the NYU Center for Data Science.



Kelly Morrison Opdyke

Kelly Morrison Opdyke and her husband, Jonathan, are the proud parents of three WSMS alumni. 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 has served as a WSMS trustee since 2017 and Chair of the Development Committee since 2019. From 2014 to 2020, she also served on the PTA Executive Board for the Anderson School, serving two terms 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 and her husband, Travis Skelton, are the proud parents of two WSMS alumni. During her time at WSMS, she was an active parent volunteer, serving on many committees, 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 of Rise Outside, a guiding organization that provides adventure programming for groups who have traditionally encountered barriers to the great outdoors.



Gillian Weindling

Gillian Weindling 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 Elyse (class of 2021).



Liz Martorella, Parent Representative

Liz Martorella is serving in her second year as co-president of the Parents Association. Liz has been an active parent volunteer over the last eight years, having had the privilege of working alongside many wonderful parents on various committees, including as co-chair of the Auction and Fall Festival. Liz has over ten years of experience in pharmaceutical marketing and advertising, working at agencies like Sudler & Hennessey and LM&P. As an account manager, Liz was a key player in the strategic planning and conceptual development of promotional and educational programs directed at medical professionals and patients. Her

marketing experience spans many therapeutic categories, including Parkinson's disease, osteoporosis, prostate cancer, antibiotics, antivirals and osteoarthritis. Liz received her BA in psychology from SUNY Geneseo and her MA in psychology with a focus on cognition, perception and neuroscience from NYU. She was part of a research team investigating the intersection of memory and emotion in the brain and published findings in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, a peer-reviewed scientific journal. Liz and her husband, Ben Swinburne, are the proud parents of Josephine ('16), Vivian ('19) and current WSMS student, Isabel.



Christina Wang, Parent Representative

Christina Wang is currently serving as co-president of the Parents Association and has been an active parent volunteer since her family moved to New York from San Francisco in 2018. She has served on many committees at WSMS, including the Admissions Committee, and co-chaired the Auction, Fall Festival and Hooked on Books. Christina is the Clinical Quality Director of Cancer Prevention at The Institute for Family Health, one of the largest community health centers in New York State, with a mission-driven focus of providing high quality, affordable health care and addressing racial and ethnic health disparities in medically underserved populations. She received her BA in biology from Rice University and her MD from Baylor College of Medicine. Prior to moving to New York, she worked at Kaiser Permanente, where she was a Senior Physician Partner and Medical Director of Acupuncture. Christina and her husband Henry are proud parents to Preston, Thompson (WSMS '20) and current student Estella.



Kira Walker, Faculty Representative

Kira Walker (née Haag) has been at WSMS since 2017 as a student teacher, assistant teacher, and, for the last three years, a head teacher in 4E. Kira is a Montessori child herself, and attended Hershey Montessori from two through Upper Elementary. After graduating from NYU, she found her way back to Montessori as an assistant at a school downtown. Believing in the Montessori method and wanting to commit to the philosophy, Kira trained through WSMS-TEP, with which she now works closely as an instructor, supervising teacher, and field consultant. In addition to her AMS credential, she has a master's degree in Early Childhood Education from The City College of New York, as well as her New York State teaching license.

DEIB IS AT THE CORE OF OUR MISSION, AND MARTHA HAAKMAT IS HELPING US ADVANCE OUR WORK



The WSMS mission has—since our founding—emphasized the importance of equity and diversity in our approach to education and in our community. In 2019 we substantiated that commitment by bringing in Martha Haakmat, the former Head of Brooklyn Heights Montessori School, who currently serves on the NYSAIS, Brearley and Early Steps Boards of Trustees. She is

the Executive Director of Haakmat Consulting, LLC, providing leadership coaching and support for DEI strategic planning for schools and other organizations.

Martha has an open, friendly, nonjudgmental approach, which encourages conversations and sharing. Her initial work at WSMS began in June of 2019 in a workshop with parents on how to answer children's questions about race and the protests for racial equity that spanned the globe that spring and summer. She provided tips and strategies to help parents handle their children's questions and concerns about the racial divisions in our country. She had parents role-play as a way to test and practice their responsiveness to questions.

She then created a series of workshops for faculty and staff, throughout school year 2019–20, that built upon their exploration of anti-bias in early childhood education, and investigate ways to create a sense of belonging for every child, with a focus on classroom culture and curriculum. She held individual meetings with teaching teams to support their particular needs, and to have a deeper conversation about their classes, ideas and questions. This work broadened in 2020–21 to training for the Board on applying an equity lens to their roles at the governance level.

What Martha loves about WSMS is our mission, and our willingness to learn together as adults in the service of our children.



Although Martha's cornerstone is DEIB, her expertise has a broad impact on interactions with children and adults, because the way to address equity is by being open and honest in our connections and communications.

As Martha cogently reminds us, children come into the classroom with open eyes. They observe, name what they see, try things, are open to a different approach if the first (or second or third ...) doesn't work. They collaborate to problem-solve, and learn from mistakes. They care.

In fact, children model for adults their openness to new ideas and to sharing ideas, and their ability to have open and honest conversation across differences. What adults sometimes forget is how important it is to unlearn/relearn/practice.

Martha's workshops are an opportunity for honest conversation, and ongoing learning for adults in a safe space. They build skills/knowledge, enhance their understanding of goals and objectives, and build a culture of practice.

Another example of Martha's approach is a faculty workshop she facilitated with partner Molly Davis and Rebecca DuVall, Librarian and Diversity Coordinator at Brooklyn Heights Montessori, on reading aloud with children. She focused on techniques to not just read but to share, to talk about what was read, and to encourage connection and critical thinking about the pictures and text. In this way, teachers can use literature to learn about how children make sense of their world. She role-modelled how to navigate questions and spark discussion. And she plans to hold a similar workshop this year with parents.

She will continue to partner with parents, centering on our goals and objectives and tracking progress toward them, while connecting the school's mission, and building a culture of working together.



Martha did two workshops with the Board last year, focused on working with our leadership to put into practice a strategic approach to equity in alignment with our mission and culture. In June 2021 the Board approved an amendment to the By-Laws, establishing the DEIB ad hoc committee as a standing Board committee, cementing our commitment. She is scheduled to hold two sessions with the Board in 2021-2022. And she will meet monthly this year with Admin on their roles, with the goal of infusing equity into our policies and procedures and systems, supporting what the faculty do in the classrooms.

Martha is genuinely impressed by the WSMS faculty: their deep engagement, readiness to share experiences, willingness to ask for support, and their rich, open and honest communications. As she has said, early childhood educators know how to move beyond DEIB as an intellectual exercise in order to make learning about equity a concrete experience for children.

Martha will expand her classroom coaching this year. Teachers will send her an agenda of their questions/ideas for discussion on curriculum, how to partner with parents, and their concerns. Martha will then foster dialogue, and provide resources and guidance.

As Mimi said so eloquently to the school community last year,

At WSMS, we have a long-standing commitment to creating an environment where every child and adult celebrates human diversity, recognizes injustice, and has the skill set to address it. We are working together to build an anti-bias community, a world in which all children are able to blossom, and each child's particular abilities and gifts are able to flourish.

Martha is helping us get there.

42 YEARS AT WSMS!



We had a lot to celebrate at the end of the 2020–21 academic year, but our happiness was tinged by the departure of WSMS teacher, Joan Shisler, after 42 amazing years.

Joan's time at WSMS began in September 1979, in 3E. She was hired as an Associate, working from 10:30 to 6:30, cementing her love of—and commitment to—working with children in what we now think of as LAP.

She quickly learned she was teaching parents as well as children (her student, Beatrice, would often say, "You were my daddy's teacher"), and she became adept in her collaborations and communications with families.

About 15 years ago, she took over the nature program from Naomi Stern, which brought her into every classroom to explore and celebrate the wonders of nature with the children. Joan is now "educating" her new puppy, Molly, and planning a trip to Belize.

Joan has lots of memories, including the AMS conference in Boston where she enjoyed the company of Dr. Gordon Mack, one of WSMS's first visiting scholars (and the father of Margot and Melissa). Another terrific memory was the 2010 trip to Ghana with six fellow teachers; they shared their teaching experience and were warmly welcomed into the lives and culture of the adults and children they met.

But, as Joan has said, "The greatest highlight has always been the interactions, the congeniality of all my fellow teachers, all the children and their parents I've had the privilege to meet, and the staff of WSMS. They have all so enriched my life."

When Joan announced her pending departure to her colleagues, she ended with a quote from Muhammad Ali: "Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on Earth."

Joan, you have enriched our lives, and we miss you!



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!



STILL MOVING



WSMS-TEP was honored last February at the Bergen-Lafayette Montessori School Gala in Jersey City for providing service and support to the school, and scholarships for their teachers in Montessori training. One of the other awards was given to Nimbus Dance Company, which partners and provides dance classes after school for the children at BLMS. Samuel Pott, the Founder and Artistic Director of Nimbus, accepted the award, and in his acceptance speech, which was after Lisanne Pinciotti's, he mentioned what a small world it is ... he went to WSMS!

Sam remembers Elspeth MacDonald, a former WSMS teacher, as a very special teacher. In fact, his family and hers are still in contact after more than 40 years. And he shared a vivid memory of his father scaling the street lights at the corner of 92nd Street to hang the banner for the Spring Fair!

Sam trained in modern dance and ballet in college. His exposure to creative movement required him to “unlearn” the more disciplined approach to dance of traditional ballet, and opened his eyes. His career has included both classic and contemporary roles. Prior to founding Nimbus, a professional dance company located in Jersey City, in 2005, he was soloist with the Martha Graham Dance Company. As their website says, Nimbus reflects his expanding “vision for dance and the arts as a catalyst for equity, community development and transformative cultural exchange.” His focus is creating and exploring movement, while making dance relevant, available and acceptable to engage the community.

Sam's time at WSMS probably laid the groundwork for his career. He loved movement activities, especially sashaying across the “gigantic space” on the top floor. He sees exploring movement and dance as not so different from other Montessori activities ... testing options, trying different ways to do things, pushing boundaries, using your body in creative ways ... And he loved the sense of community in the school, reflected in the Spring Fair and so many other activities.

In addition to Bergen Lafayette, Nimbus now provides classes to some 7,000 children/year in their communities and schools, and also offers classes on-site at Nimbus. And Sam is closely tied to Montessori in another way: his daughter is a 6th grader at Waterfront Montessori.



STRATEGIC PLAN 2021–2023 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1963, West Side Montessori School (WSMS) was established with the vision of providing Upper West Side families with an option for innovative and dynamic early childhood education programming, combining key aspects of the Montessori curriculum with the best practices of current child development, and reflecting the economically, racially, culturally, and intellectually diverse community. To help navigate the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, the school's families and leaders undertook a strategic planning process to guide their efforts from the school year 2020–2021 to the end of the 2022–2023 school year.

The strategic planning effort was rooted in WSMS's Vision and Mission:

We prepare children to be resilient, creative and independent problem solvers. We are leaders in teaching Montessori principles and incorporate the best practices of



modern early childhood education in our classrooms. West Side Montessori School is a vibrant collaborative community of passionate teachers, joyful children and engaged parents. Our diverse community is a reflection of the city in which we live.

Through the strategic planning process, WSMS’s strategic planning team identified **four high-impact goals** to pursue in 2020–2023:

- **Goal 1: Ensure that WSMS continues to be at the forefront of national and international early education.** WSMS is a national and international leader in early learning. We will continue to provide outstanding opportunities for children to learn the academic and personal skills reflective of the best equity-informed research on child development and social-emotional intelligence.
- **Goal 2: Strengthen partnerships with families to better support their children’s education.** WSMS is a key partner and supporter of parents as they nurture their children’s development. We will continue to provide resources and programs to better support the next generation of WSMS parents, building on family strengths, cultural backgrounds, languages, and experience.

- **Goal 3: Enhance the ability of teachers and staff to meet the needs of WSMS students.**

Key to providing our children with the best possible early childhood education is a dedicated community of teachers, administrators and parents for whom this is their highest priority.

- **Goal 4: Strengthen WSMS operations to ensure sustained contribution to the highest quality education.**

WSMS must maintain our financial strength and flexibility while continuing to achieve our goals of building an inclusive community.

WSMS’s leadership team and Board are excited to begin implementation of the plan and advance the organization’s impact on its young learners and their families for years to come.



ARTHUR SACHS

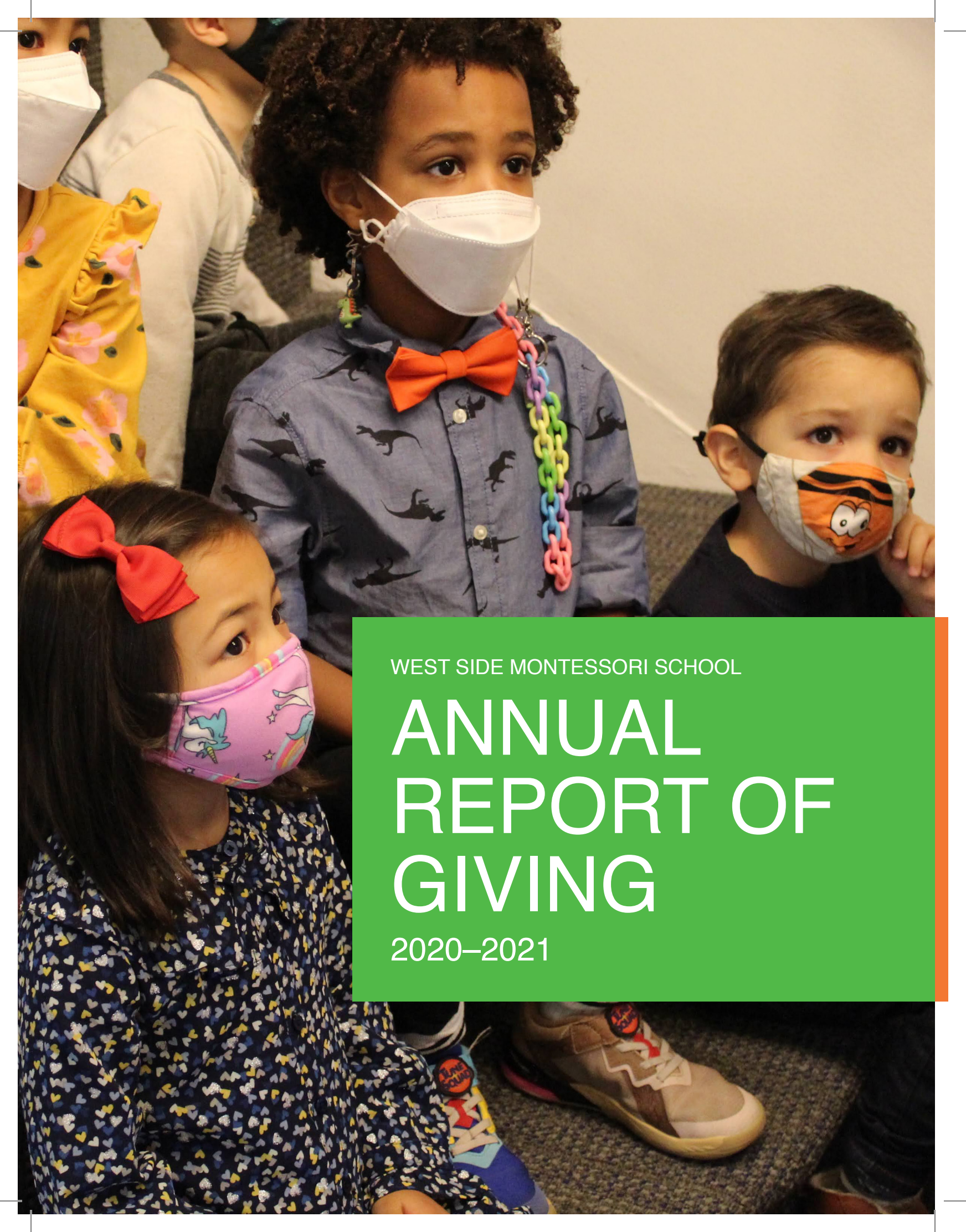
The WSMS community is saddened by the death last April of long-time Board member Arthur Sachs. Art and Mary were active parents from 1977 to 1986. Art served on the Board for 10 years, playing an important role as treasurer.

The Sachs family was profiled in the Fall 2011 issue of *Great Beginnings*. Art’s sons, Tim ‘86, Chris ‘83, and Andrew ‘80, have fond memories of WSMS, and especially of their time walking to school with their dad. Chris and Andrew gave moving tributes to Art at his memorial service, and Chris even included a story of Art cooking hot dogs at the WSMS Spring Fair!

We send our deep sympathy to Mary and her sons.



Left to Right: Art, Mary, Andrew, Tim, and Chris
Photo by: Tatiana Urquiza

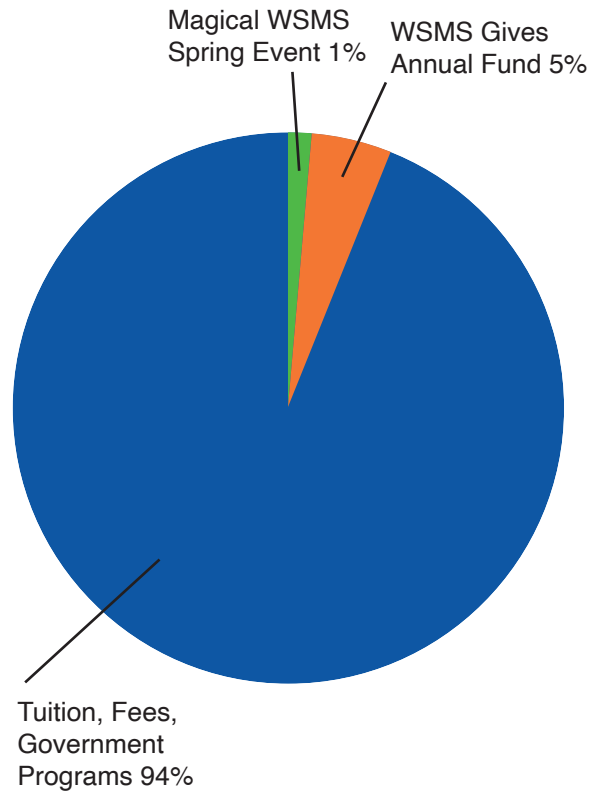


WEST SIDE MONTESSORI SCHOOL

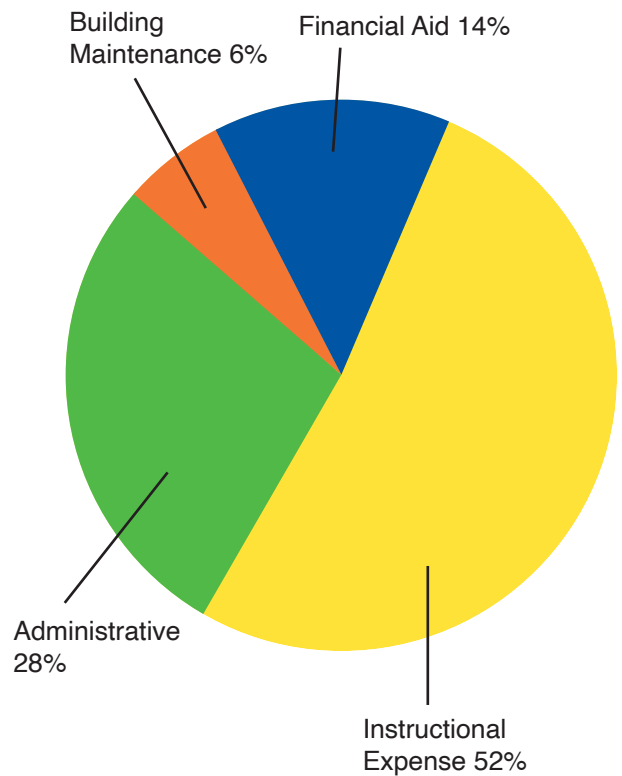
ANNUAL REPORT OF GIVING

2020–2021

2020–2021 REVENUE



2020–2021 OPERATING EXPENSES



FUNDRAISING RESULTS 2020–2021

WSMS GIVES ANNUAL FUND.....	\$476,214
MAGICAL WSMS SPRING EVENT.....	\$106,719
<hr/>	
TOTAL RAISED.....	\$582,933

DONOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

WSMS GIVES

The Parents Association faced challenges never experienced before throughout this past year, not the least of which was how to replace the Annual Auction, which has always been our source to fund financial aid, with something that would involve the community in its creation, celebration and donation. And they did it!

First, they re-structured Annual Giving and the Auction as *WSMS Gives*. They expanded outreach through classroom and alumni Zoom gatherings. And then they got the community to give ... time, talent and treasure!

Parent participation reached an unprecedented 97%!

We are deeply grateful to our community for your exceptional generosity and support.



Our apologies if we have inadvertently left you off or mis-labeled your contribution ... this year has been tricky in many ways!

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FOUNDERS FUND FOR FINANCIAL AID

Ayn Williamson



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MAGICAL WSMS SPRING EVENT

The *Magical WSMS Spring Event* raised almost \$107,000 (net of expenses) through enthusiastic bidding on the Class Art Projects and Teacher Time Projects, extraordinary participation in the Classroom Playdate raffle, and amazingly generous participation in the Fund-A-Need projects. And, before we even started the week of Magic, we had already received generous contributions from an array of families and friends as sponsors and underwriters.

Under the leadership of co-chairs Ankur Keswani (Isha, 4E), Allison Kohrs (Zara, Gym East) and Yasmin Nozari (Cyrus, 2W), our dedicated committee members came up with this amazing idea and made it happen! They created solicitation letters and web content, decorated the Crabapple Grove for the Classroom Art Project reveals, and manned a table at drop-off and pick-up to encourage bidding, raffle ticket purchases, and support of Fund-A-Need.

We are incredibly grateful to every parent who made this happen, to the teachers who worked so creatively with the children, and to the many generous donors and prize winners ... your contributions, both big and small, bring our community together and make this a special place. And your support of our financial aid program enables us, once again, to proudly welcome a new group of lifelong learners to the magical WSMS family.

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MAGICAL SPRING EVENT AUCTION WINNERS

CLASS ART PROJECT WINNERS

T1: Randi and John Sienkiewicz
T2: Thabisa Lane and John Parker
1W: Qianwen Liu and Dai Shi
Garden: Victoria and Josh Feltman
2E: Mary Dear
2W: Ji Lee and Eric Liaw
3E: Ting Chen and Ken Myers
3W: Christina and Howard Blaustein

4E: Helis Zulijani-Boye and Andreas Boye
4W: Jennifer Conway and Victor Manuel
Gym East: Allison and Ken Kohrs
Gym West: Sasank and Raashi Chary

TEACHER TIME WINNERS

Drip, Splatter, Splash ... Tie-Dye the Jackson Pollock way at WSMS Castle
Lilian and Scott Kim

Liz Martorella and Benjamin Swinburne
Christina and Henry Wang

High Tea at WSMS Castle

Wencan Tang and Pinxing Ye

Potions, Tonics and Magic Brews

Sue Yoo and Jason Paik

Tinker Bell's Magic Garden

Ankur and Rohit Keswani
Annie Kim and Jeff Lin
Jessica and John Thye
Gillian and Adrien Weindling

Yucky, Messy Mud Monsters, ahhhhhhh ...

Melissa Mansur and Kurt Miller
Catherine Chen and David Sheng

CLASSROOM PLAYDATE RAFFLE WINNERS

Garden: Bend It Like Shawn & Amy
2W: Magical Ball and Bubble Extravaganza



VOLUNTEER ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

Because of COVID, this year was very different from our traditions ... no Fall Festival, no Auction Gala ... But our parents rose to the occasion and provided many creative opportunities to partner in our community support and to make lifelong friends.

We could not be more grateful to PA co-presidents, Liz Martorella and Gillian Weindling, and to each and every person named below.



PARENTS ASSOCIATION 2020–2021

PA CO-PRESIDENTS

Liz Martorella
Gillian Weindling

1W

Charles Hershel
Michelle Tsang

4E

Vern Co
Ankur Keswani

CLASS REPRESENTATIVES

Class Rep

Christina Wang
Lilian Kim

2E

Melissa Mansur
Jessica Walton

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Laura Holzer
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Coordinators

Christina Wang
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2W

Yasmin Nozari
Jeremy Vandel

Gym East

Marie Blondina
Ernest Perez

T1

Marguerite McNicoll

3E

Nadine Carroll
Paul Flach

Gym West

Eddie Laux
Geneveve
Rodriguez-Avello

T2

Rory Leraris
Carrie Sporer

3W

Lilian Kim
Christina Wang

Garden

Shan Hicks
Tameka Koney



MAGICAL WSMS SPRING EVENT

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Allison Kohrs
Yasmin Nozari

Tom Murray
Courtney Hughes Phelps
Fay Sardjono
Dai Shi
Antonio Tomarchio
Jessica Thye
Kenneth Yoo
Wencan Tang
Sue Yoo

Melissa Mansur
Koren McCaffrey
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Michael Harrison
Laura Holzer
Elena Jacque
Chris Lockhart
Latia McAlister

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS

Marie Blondina
Gabriela Ciocarlie
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WSMS GIVES TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT

Kurt Miller



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 Mary Dear
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Fall Festival
Bulb Planting
Class Photo Day
Library Helpers
Year-End Picnic
 (unfortunately these events were cancelled)

Great Beginnings

2021

Very special thanks to the WSMS parents, the WSMS faculty, and the WSMS administrative team, who helped in ways too numerous to count.

Editor: Tina Connelly
 Creative: Jenna Verhoff Wagner
 Photography: WSMS Faculty and Parents, especially Melissa Mansur and Lindsey Lynch



WSMS
 West Side Montessori School
 Founded in 1963

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Note: **Bold** indicates committee chair



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