



WSMS-TEP Recognized as Model Teacher Ed Program

Part of the mission of West Side Montessori School is our deep commitment to better understanding what education for young children is about and to sharing these emerging understandings with parents and the broader educational and social service communities. To that end we help prepare future teachers through our on-site weekend Montessori teacher preparation program (WSMS-TEP) and through our vigorous student teaching program.

The Montessori approach, combined with ongoing and extensive child development research, provides the common ground for TEP students, faculty, and WSMS to do the very best job that we can to support each child in developing an exceptional educational beginning.

Every seven years, WSMS-TEP must stand for reaccreditation. Our accrediting agency is the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education, or MACTE. When graduates earn a certificate from a MACTE-accredited program, they are assured that their Montessori credential will be recognized throughout the world.

In late July, WSMS-TEP welcomed the MACTE/AMS accrediting team. (AMS—the American Montessori Society—is a partner with MACTE in establishing criteria for accreditation.) The team came to validate the self-study; to observe the TEP program in action; to interview current students, graduates of the program, employers of WSMS-TEP graduates, and WSMS-TEP faculty; and to review a broad assortment of documents, including admission and enrollment policies, student records, syllabi, financial records, assessment protocols, and quality assurance indicators.

The team found WSMS-TEP to be in full compliance with every standard. They stated that WSMS-TEP is a model program that serves its students as well as the Montessori community.

MACTE'S WRITTEN REPORT ARTICULATED THE FOLLOWING STRENGTHS:

- This is an organization that clearly knows its identity as defined by its mission statement. All activities are designed to clearly support the mission.
- Students voice a strong sense of community and support for their learning process.
- The diversity of the faculty and students creates a culturally rich environment.
- The teachers provide an excellent model for an urban Montessori child-centered environment.
- Among the faculty there is a clear understanding of roles and of the importance of working together.
- There is a strong indication that the teachers collaborate on curriculum development, reflect on the efficacy of the program, and strive to meet the needs of students.
- The institution regularly seeks feedback, is open to suggestions, and makes an effort to improve.
- The program provides exceptional direction during the practicum phase. The plan, including the practicum coordinator and the student teaching seminar, provides clear requirements and well-defined methods of accountability, guidance, and support.

The team also congratulated us on our steady growth. They noted that throughout the country many Montessori teacher education programs are experiencing declining enrollment, and several are offering classes only every other year. In contrast, this summer we welcomed our largest class ever (24 students).

Program administrators (and senior WSMS faculty members) Nanci Guartofierro and Melissa Vallo earned well-deserved kudos for all they did to prepare for this visit. Over the course of 18 months they completed the self-study and compiled all of the documents to be reviewed on-site. In doing this work, they also developed improved systems that contribute to our administrative efficiency and to our growing numbers. For example, they developed a series of information sessions for prospective students. As program administrators, Melissa and Nanci had the opportunity to share their impressive classroom expertise while expanding their own skill and experience bases.

Mimi Basso, Head of School, also expressed her appreciation to the entire WSMS-TEP faculty, hailing them as dedicated, gifted professionals with a sincere desire to share their talents

with developing teachers. The work they do ensures that those who complete WSMS-TEP will be effective, responsive, well-prepared teachers.

Mimi also cited the WSMS faculty, who daily model excellent professional qualities and adhere to the highest standards; the head teachers, who work with student teachers every day in their classrooms; and the Montessori schools that welcome and support TEP students in their internship year and hire our graduates.



What Is WSMS-TEP, Anyway?

In 1967 the Central Harlem Association of Montessori Parents (CHAMP) offered a series of workshops designed to help parents become partners in their children's education. This program evolved into Project CHAMP, which prepared parents to become Montessori teachers. Classes were held on weekends, often in the school of the instructor.

In 1995 CHAMP-MTEP moved to West Side Montessori School and, to meet New York State requirements, changed its name to West Side Montessori School's Teacher Education Program (WSMS-TEP). Graduates earn the Montessori credential and, if appropriate, up to 30 undergraduate credits from Empire State College.

WSMS-TEP continues to be well known for the wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds of its students, and for its uniquely qualified faculty. This year's WSMS-TEP students speak 10 languages; some students are seeking career changes,

while others are just starting out; three students are current or former WSMS parents. The faculty includes current and former WSMS teachers and administrators, as well as faculty and administrators from other Montessori schools in New York City.

Our graduates are well prepared to create child-centered environments, to design thematic curriculum units, and to work collaboratively with parents, co-workers, and other professionals. Most important, they understand the importance of developing relationships with children. And they are terrific teachers—approximately half of the WSMS faculty are TEP alumnae!

“The training of the teacher is something far more than the learning of ideas. It is a preparation of the spirit.”

—Maria Montessori

WSMS-TEP Faculty

The WSMS-TEP faculty are an impressive group with strong professional backgrounds and a love of both teaching and learning. Most, but not all, are current WSMS teachers. Several are WSMS-TEP graduates themselves. And all embody the above words of Maria Montessori.

- **CAROL BAIRD** (Cultural Subjects – Movement): WSMS movement teacher
 - **MIMI BASSO** (Program Director): Head of West Side Montessori School
 - **LORÉN DENICOLA** (Philosophy and Student Teacher Supervisor); former WSMS head teacher
- **NATALIA FISHER** (Math Instructor): WSMS head teacher
- **NANCI GUARTOFIERRO** (Cultural Studies and Program Administrator): WSMS head teacher
- **WENDY KALICHSTEIN** (Cultural Studies and Field Consultant): Administrator, Jack and Jill Montessori School, East Rockaway, NY
- **YAYOI KOBAYASHI** (Math Instructor): WSMS-TEP alumna; Park West Montessori School teacher
 - **DONNA LONGDON** (Student Teacher Seminar): WSMS head teacher
 - **MARGOT MACK** (Cultural Studies – Art): WSMS-TEP alumna; WSMS head teacher
- **ROBYN MERNICK** (Language): WSMS head teacher
- **MELISSA VALLO** (Practical Life, Sensory Motor, and Program Administrator): WSMS-TEP alumna; WSMS head teacher
- **STEPHANIE WHALEN** (Child Development and Observation): Education Director, Park West Montessori School
 - **SUZANNE WRIGHT** (Language Instructor): WSMS teacher



For more information about WSMS-TEP and its faculty, please consult the WSMS web site (www.wsmsnyc.org).