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Dear friends of WSMS,

I am delighted to share with you this issue of *Great Beginnings*, which celebrates our successful academic year and gives you an inside look at how we spent our summer and what we accomplished.

The big news this fall is the opening of our new dedicated space for the Twos Program at 302 West 91st Street (in the basement of the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church).

As many of you know, in the fall of 2013 we took the big step of testing interest in providing Montessori education for two-year-olds to address the needs of current parents. The response was overwhelming, and as a result we devoted a classroom to these young students while limiting admissions to siblings and legacy applicants.

Interest in this new programming option led to an exploration of how to balance the opportunity for two-year-olds with the simultaneous need to serve an incoming three-year-old population. The ups-and-downs and ultimately exciting resolution achieved this summer is detailed in this issue’s article, “Twos Twos Twos ... Wonderful Twos!”

The pilot Twos opportunity happened as we expanded WSMS-TEP, our teacher education program, to offer the Twos credential. The TEP focus has continued to expand academically (into more credentials) and geographically, with significant activity in the summer, as you will see in “Not a Typical West Side Montessori Summer...”. And the new location includes office space and storage for TEP admin.

And the summer is also the time when, with fewer people around, we take care of facilities maintenance that would be disruptive during the school year. I am grateful to Amy Stoney, Director of Operations, and Shawn Cumberbatch, Facilities Manager, for being on top of our needs and ensuring they are addressed. This article, “Behind the Scenes,” is a recap of all that they do.

“Talking to Children about Race and Difference,” written by WSMS Diversity Practitioner, Giuliana de Grazia, is a fascinating article about diversity at WSMS. We are proud that we were founded in 1963 with diversity key to our mission, and that our commitment has only strengthened over the past fifty-plus years.

New in this issue is Alumni Notes—input from alumni families on what their kids have been up to since they left. I encourage you to send us your updates for our next issue!

As always, I am deeply grateful for the enthusiastic support, both financially and as event volunteers, of our parents, faculty and administrators, alumni families and friends. Your generosity is detailed in the 2017-2018 Annual Report section of this issue. My special thanks go to the Board, chaired so effectively by Myles Amend, and to last year’s PA co-chairs, Tenille Skelton and Bonny Whitcher, who recruited some amazing talent to run special events for our families.

Mimi Basso
Head of School
A LETTER FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

Dear members of the WSMS community,

I have been thinking a lot about the incredible support multiple generations of the WSMS community have offered to our school over the past 55 years. This generosity has given us the confidence and wherewithal to grow our program in important ways over the years. The recent additions of classroom space for the Twos Program and dedicated office space for WSMS-TEP at 302 West 91st Street are the latest examples of the impact of your generosity. The expansion of the TEP program, both in the credentials offered as well as geographically—we now offer teacher education programs in China—has cemented our global leadership in Montessori education.

We have much to be proud of, and credit for the inspiration and its implementation belongs to Head of School Mimi Basso and her multi-talented team. This issue of Great Beginnings gives you insight into two areas—facilities management and the teacher education program—and these hard workers are emblematic of all that goes on behind the scenes to provide our children with their first steps in a lifetime of learning. I know I speak for the Board in expressing our appreciation to the WSMS faculty and administrators.

This year’s Annual Report commemorates our busy year and the backing of so many people without whom what we’ve accomplished could not happen. Special thanks to the 2017-2018 PA co-presidents, Tenille Skelton and Bonny Whitcher, and to the many volunteers who gave of their time and talent to make this year so successful. I also want to thank my fellow trustees for their leadership, hard work, and support.

Finally, thank you to everyone who contributed to the Annual Fund. Your continuing generosity at every level ensures that we will be able to provide the highest quality education for generations to come.

With deep gratitude,

Myles B. Amend
President, Board of Trustees
(Ashley Amend-Thomas ’11)
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 B. 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, the 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 previous served on the College Board of Advisors and in the Admission Ambassador program for Georgetown University. Tim graduated from Georgetown University with a bachelor's degree in economics in 1992, where he was a Baker Scholar.

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 JD from the 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 many years as an investment banker, beginning with Cowen and Company, where she focused on healthcare and technology, and later with the Credit Suisse First Boston Technology Group. 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 the Stanford Graduate School of Business. Kyra and her husband, Travis, are proud parents of four children: a daughter who graduated WSMS in 2017, her twin brother who is in a home-school special education program, a son who graduated from WSMS in 2018, and a son who currently attends the WSMS Two's Program. Kyra has been actively involved at WSMS as a parent volunteer and serves on the WSMS Admissions Committee.

Mort Haque, Treasurer

Mort Haque (Treasurer) 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 before that 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, and she serves as a trustee for the Lawyers Alliance for New York. She is also a member of the Steering Committee of the Kate Stone-man Project, an organization devoted to the advancement of women in the legal profession. Jennifer and her husband, Victor Manu-el, 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.
Mark Cicirelli

Mark Cicirelli is married to Lisa and father to Emma and Alexandra. He is a Portfolio Manager and US Head of Insurance at Elliott Management, a NY-based investment firm. He joined Elliott in 2005, before which he worked at TH Lee Putnam Ventures, a private equity fund, and at J.P. Morgan Chase & Company. Mark graduated from Dartmouth with an AB in government and economics, and from Harvard with an MBA. He serves on the New York board of All Stars Project, a non-profit that supports the development of inner city youth. He also serves on the boards of Opus Bank, Paraline Holding, and Aelous Capital Management, and is Chairman of Bernoulli Health.

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, two who are current students at WSMS, and one who graduated in 2016. 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. Lindsay and her husband, Ali Dibaj, are proud parent of two WSMS alums. During her time as a parent at WSMS, Lindsay served for two years as the co-head of the Parents Association, and before that helped run the Auction raffle and WSMS’s annual Bulb Planting event. She remains an active participant in WSMS as a member of the Admissions Committee and a Board Trustee. Lindsay also serves on the board of Trees New York, a non-profit dedicated to the care of street trees in New York City.

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 works as a Program Manager in the pediatrics department for NYU Langone Health. 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.

Justin Hamilton

Justin Hamilton is a media, message and strategy consultant based in New York City. He has spent over a decade advising elected officials, candidates for higher office, federal cabinet members, CEOs, Fortune 500 companies, venture capitalists and entrepreneurs on how to develop and execute winning strategies. Prior to launching his business, Justin served as Chief of Staff and Head of Corporate Communications for News Corp’s education technology division, Amplify. He also served as the national spokesperson for President Barack Obama’s education reform efforts, where he helped to develop and execute the groundbreaking media campaign around the President’s Race to the Top competition. Before joining the Obama Administration, Justin served on both the Obama-Biden Presidential Transition Team and as a battleground spokesperson for the President’s 2008 Campaign. In addition to working on presidential and congressional races across the country over the past 10 years, Justin has served in both policy and management positions for members of the House and Senate. Justin lives on the Upper West Side with his wife Lucia, their two beautiful daughters, Vivienne and Lyla, and their Boston Terrier, El Guapo.

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 BS and a BArch in Architecture, 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 9 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 2017 Sandstational, and is actively involved as an alumni parent volunteer. Nigel-Ann and her husband, Marco Williamson, are proud parents of two WSMS alums.

Elise J.

Elise J. is a dentist and mother of two. She holds a doctorate in dental surgery from the University of Strasbourg, France, as well as a master’s degree in cellular and molecular physiotherapy. She relocated from France several years ago and lives on the Upper West Side with her husband and their two children. She has previously worked with several non-profit organizations, and is actively involved in the community.

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 one current WSMS student and one WSMS graduate. She earned a BBA and MBA from the University of Karachi.
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, serving on the board of FC Harlem, a youth soccer and enrichment organization. He and his wife, Vernalliz, 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 parent, a member of the Admissions Committee, and a two-time co-chair for the Fall Festival. 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.

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 Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2004, he joined Tricadia Capital LLC, a $4.2B multi-strategy credit hedge fund, and worked there for fourteen years as a partner and portfolio manager, trading U.S. and European fixed income and equity derivatives. He recently 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 one son, Dillon, at WSMS and another son, Aaron, who graduated in 2016.

Bonny Whitcher
Bonny Whitcher is a CPA and received her BS in business and economics from Lehigh University. Prior to starting a family, she worked at Ernst & Young for nine years in their financial services office, and then spent several years as the corporate controller of a boutique investment bank headquartered in New York City. She also provides volunteer financial advisory services to the Harlem Educational Activities Fund. Bonny served two years as co-president of the Parents Association and served on the Admissions Committee. Bonny and her husband, Jonathan, reside on the Upper West Side and are the proud parents of a daughter who graduated from WSMS in 2017, a son who is currently attending WSMS, and a son born in 2018.

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 N.Y.U. and a BA in psychology from George Washington University.

Mary Pat Dowhy
Mary Pat Dowhy is serving as the current co-president of the Parents Association. Mary Pat and her wife, Donna Canfield, are the proud parents of Pierce, who is in his second 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.

Tenille Skelton
Tenille Skelton is currently co-president of the Parents Association and an active WSMS volunteer, having served on several committees since 2015. 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 and her husband, Travis Skelton, are the proud parents of one current WSMS student and one WSMS alum.

Casey Gomez
Casey Gomez received a BA in Human Development and Family Studies from the University of Connecticut. Casey was always interested in working with children and was introduced to WSMS by a former family of the school. Casey received her AMS Early Childhood Montessori certification from WSMS-TEP. She earned a master’s degree in Early Childhood Special and General Education from Concordia College and has her New York State teaching certification. Casey joined WSMS in 2011 and joined WSMS-TEP as an instructor in 2018.
...though maybe there is no such thing as a “typical summer”!

This year we had seven weeks of summer camp, did multiple maintenance projects (see “Behind the Scenes”) and renovated space to expand the Twos Program (see “Twos Twos Twos … Wonderful Twos!”).

Summer is typically the busiest academic time for WSMS-TEP, our teacher education program, because that is when most teachers are free to take supplementary training. That was certainly true this summer. However, traditional Montessori credential training was far from the only activity keeping Lisanne Pinciotti, Director of Teacher Education, and her dedicated crew busy.

For one thing, TEP officially relocated to 302 West 91st Street, with office and classroom space rented from the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church. Starting in the fall, Infant Toddler (IT) and Early Childhood (EC) classes will be held there. At the same time, all TEP documents and other materials were moved from the fifth floor of the main school building to a dedicated office in the church basement.

This past summer eighteen enthusiastic new students started their Early Childhood courses in the beautiful Demas Hall on the main level of the church. Students on the fall EC track joined them for the last three weeks.

Elementary (EL) classes were held at Metropolitan Montessori School on West 85th Street, which allowed us to use their age-appropriate classroom settings. Twenty-one students attended these classes. Rosemary Quaranta, Head of the Montessori Lab School of Xavier University in Cincinnati, OH, shared her 40 years of Montessori experience during a two-week segment of the program. This year the program included classes for the Elementary I (ages 6-9) credential. Next year we will expand to include Elementary II (ages 9-12).

Among our students this summer were nine (one EC and eight EL) from the Miftaahul Uloom Academy in Union City, NJ, and seven (four EC and three EL) from WeGrow, a new school created by WeWork, initially for their employees’ children, which incorporates the educational pedagogies of Montessori, Reggio Emilia and Bank Street.

Because most people seeking the Infant Toddler credential work on a year-round basis, there were no IT classes held at WSMS this summer (students typically meet two Saturdays/month during the academic year). Instead Karen Deinzer, Tara Greaney and Maria Rosado headed to China to provide six weeks of training for iHommy International Daycare in Beijing. They had twelve lively and enthusiastic students enrolled in the academic phase, who are now in practicums to receive their IT credentials next June. Karen and Maria will be in regular contact with them via Zoom and will likely visit two-three times over the year.

The summer Administrator (Admin) classes were held in the Parents Room/Library for two-and-a-half weeks. There were three new students, and seven continuing students. Admin is a bit different from the regular credential, in that admission is rolling and the students therefore overlap. The credential requires an online course during the fall and two summer sessions. Melissa Freeman, former Associate Head of WSMS, oversees the management of the program (she also oversees practicums for both EC and Admin), and Bev Smith, former Assistant Head of WSMS, serves as a mentor and coach.

Lisanne met regularly with her team throughout the summer: Unit Carruyo is the IT Coordinator; Sheba Kapur is the Elementary Level Coordinator and oversees visa procurement for international students; in addition to her Admin role, Melissa Freedman coordinates practicums for EC students. They are now working on creating an online professional development curriculum, and a “Montessori Inclusion Endorsement” (MIE) which would offer an additional qualification in special education for TEP students next summer. Giulia DeGrazia will be leading the MIE team.

Another summer focus was the request of Starwood Montessori School in Frisco, TX, to provide training for their faculty. Lisanne and her crew are developing a curriculum that would be available in two-week segments and seminar weekends taught by TEP faculty, and in online courses.

As Lisanne says, the Montessori philosophy is a foundation that ensures consistency in the academic approach, but—at the same time—there has to be growth to ensure vibrancy. This is as true for the adult programs as it is for the children’s. Lisanne credits and is grateful to the WSMS Board for their faith in, and support of, the TEP goals; to Head of School Mimi Basso for her ceaseless encouragement and support; to Amy Stoney, Shawn Cumberbatch and their team for cheerfully and effectively addressing TEP facilities requirements; and to her team and faculty for ensuring the highest quality education for the adult students enrolled in TEP.

Summer may be over, but the busy world of TEP keeps on going.
HATS OFF TO WSMS-TEP GRADS

On June 20, 2018, WSMS-TEP celebrated its largest graduating class ever, with a special ceremony held in the Trinity School auditorium. Sixty-six students completed the program and will receive their Montessori credentials from AMS in the Infant Toddler, Early Childhood, and—for the first time—Elementary levels. The graduates from the Infant Toddler additional location in Beijing, China, joined via Zoom and were greeted warmly by all in attendance. The invited speaker was Gina Lofquist, Senior Director of Teacher Education for the American Montessori Society. We were also delighted to welcome Melina Papadimitriou, the new AMS Director of Teacher Education Affiliation and Services as a special guest. Gina lauded the group for their efforts throughout training and encouraged the graduates to use all they have learned to inspire children in their environments, work collaboratively with fellow teachers, and maintain their focus on the essential elements of Montessori’s philosophy.

The enthusiastic applause of a theater full of friends and family was a joyous ending to WSMS-TEP training and a great beginning to the careers of our newest alumni group!
TWOS TWOS TWOS ... WONDERFUL TWOS!

This past September 47 two-year-olds began their educational journeys at WSMS … an event no one could have anticipated ten years ago.

When Mimi Basso returned to WSMS as Head of School in 2007, she had a wealth of exciting ideas about how to maintain and enhance the school’s premier reputation in the New York early childhood sphere. She had served as WSMS Associate Head of School in the late 1990s and had long been affiliated with the Teacher Education Program, so she was intimately familiar with what we did, and in her role as Director of School Accreditation at the American Montessori Society she knew what our peers were doing.

Mimi devoted a lot of listening time in her first years as Head and quickly learned that many parents wanted to expose their children to educational opportunities before they reached eligibility for WSMS. She realized that we sometimes lost families who needed all-day or part-time coverage (in fact, this has even been an issue with WSMS teachers who have left for positions at schools with younger program options).

At the same time, she was hearing from her peers about the need for Infant Toddler Montessori credential training.

This spearheaded the addition of several action items to the 2011-2016 Strategic Plan.

WHY DID WE ADD A TWOS PROGRAM?

Back in 2010, Suzanne Day, the Director of Admissions, conducted a survey. Some 60% of children had already been in a formal program, most of which were “separation” programs (which require parents to drop the children off rather than participate), before attending WSMS. Some parents questioned why WSMS did not offer some form of this opportunity as well.

At the same time, UPK (Universal Pre-Kindergarten) was gaining widespread support in local public schools, and there was some legitimate concern in the administration that we would be losing four-year-olds to tuition-free schooling. We actually offered UPK for several years, but stopped because the city required separate classrooms—not consistent with the Montessori mixed age approach—and we had to accept all applicants. In addition, we quickly realized that having one-third of the students (all the four-year-olds!) paying no/minimal tuition would have a significant impact on our ability to provide our programming and offer financial aid to families who needed it.

Meanwhile WSMS-TEP (the Teacher Education Program), under the direction of Loren DeNicola, applied to AMS (the American Montessori Society) to add Infant Toddler credential training to their options.

In 2013 we launched a two-year pilot program and the first class of Twos began at WSMS under the direction of Karen Deinzer. [You can see a detailed description of the pilot program in the Fall 2013 issue of Great Beginnings on our web site.] The response was enthusiastic. Students were generally limited to siblings or connected families, so as not to affect availability to three-year-olds whose families chose to wait. The next year we offered an afternoon half-day option, but quickly discovered that two-year-olds really need nap time. We offered two-, three- and five-day options, and ended up with 55 two-year-olds in attendance. The logistics were complicated and we were forced to limit enrollment opportunities for three-year-olds new to WSMS because there were fewer classrooms.
Ultimately Mimi Basso and Judy Lyons, who succeeded Suzanne as Director of Admissions, resolved that what we do best is five-day programming. They decided to offer mornings, 9-3 and LAP (8:30-5:30) options for two-year-olds. And to figure out how to maintain sufficient openings for new three-year-olds.

Fast forward to 2018! Enthusiasm for the Twos remained high, and the limited number of classrooms meant outside families had little likelihood of acceptance. After considering a variety of options, we negotiated a long-term lease with the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church on the corner of 91st Street and West End Avenue. The summer of 2018 saw a major renovation of the basement space to include two classrooms and dedicated office space for TEP. The overhaul was not without a few unexpected snags, but ultimately 32 happy children were welcomed into the brand new space: 18 stay until 3:00 p.m., while the rest leave at 12:30 p.m. Another 15 are housed in 1W on 92nd Street; most of them are in LAP (the Late Afternoon Program).

**DO THE TWO-YEAR-OLDS HAVE A DIFFERENT MONTESSORI PROGRAM?**

Two-year-olds are active creatures—they need 45 minutes to an hour of gross motor activity every day—and their small motor skills are still developing. Key areas to address include language development, physical development and socialization.

The classroom shelves include an assortment of activities to meet the needs of every individual. These materials are chosen to tie more closely to the younger children’s abilities and interests, while helping them understand cause and effect. Easels and shelf supplies offer multiple creative art options.

But the big difference from the typical early childhood classroom is physical activity: we have less furniture in the classroom, which allows for bikes, balance boards, movement and block building … and we have even allocated space in the hallway outside the church classrooms for racing! Weather permit-
A couple of years ago I observed a white child playing in the block area. She had built a large building and arranged some of the small wooden people on what appeared to be the building’s roof. She then lifted one wooden person up, as it were scaling the building, and used another to knock it down. I didn’t notice that she had chosen only white people for the rooftop until I heard her say, “No brown people allowed!” I then realized that she was choosing white figures for the rooftop and a brown-skinned figure to be repeatedly excluded from the roof.

Feelings of surprise, concern, and reponsibility consumed me. This is not okay! What do I do? Keep watching? Do I say something? Ask her to stop? What if I say the wrong thing? Ugh, I wish I hadn’t seen this. Can I ignore it? Why is she doing this?

The question of why inspired me to be come curious and to learn more for a few reasons. Montessori teachers work daily to better understand their children. Furthermore, as early childhood teachers, we are continually learning about how children make meaning from their experiences. We also want to know how children communicate the knowledge they absorb. I decided to ask the child a question, and I proceeded to learn that this child had recently read a chil-

TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT RACE AND DIFFERENCE

By Giuliana de Grazia, WSMS Diversity Practitioner

dren’s book about Ruby Bridges and another book about Martin Luther King, Jr. The child explained that white people did this. White people didn’t let brown-skinned people in their buildings.

We talked for a little bit longer, and I realized that this child was interested in the power of white people from the stories she had read. She had not, however, picked up on the consequences of the power and the injustice of the power. She didn’t realize that the stories were not championing white supremacists, but revealing a terrible and unjust part of our history, our country. I would need to find some books to read with this child to point out the injustice, the unkindness, and to invite her empathy.

This is only one example of a time that I didn’t really know what to do or say. I was reminded of how hard it is to talk with children about race and difference, and I felt weak, like I should have found something more powerful to say in the moment. Perhaps now I could. But, honestly, without practice it can also be hard to talk with adults about differences and our society’s response to them.

Many adults feel uncomfortable talking with children about race and difference. Perhaps this makes sense, since according to Derald Wing Sue, “How our society perceives race is centuries old and is filled with ambivalence, confusion, misunderstanding, conflict, and intense, powerful feelings … most people prefer to avoid the topic of race, to remain silent, to minimize its importance or impact, or to pretend not to notice it” (Race Talk and The Conspiracy of Silence, 2015, p. 5-6). His understanding aligns with the theory of ‘aversive racism’: the behaviors of white people whose egalitarian ideas conflict with their implicit biases, sometimes leading to discriminatory behavior, ambivalence, and avoidance (The Aversive Form of Racism, Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986). This idea complicates the path forward. How can people of all races recognize and work against implicit biases?

Derald Wing Sue has advice for adults wanting to talk to children about race; however, his suggestions come with a great deal of work and accountability. He insists that adults must become highly aware of their own biases and relationships with race and difference before preparing to work with children. He writes, “Self-healing must come before other-healing” (2015, p. 213). His is a tall order. What if we don’t yet feel prepared or “healed”? Should we stay silent?

Perhaps Sue sets the bar too high for
those of us who are just beginning to awaken to our biases or to the complexity of our participation in society. Isn’t there some way we can talk to our children while we are also engaged in the learning and growth Sue describes?

Louise Derman-Sparks reminds us that when we aren’t sure of just what to say as an answer, we can almost always help a child make meaning in some way. For example, we can ask questions to better understand what a child is thinking. We can let children know that it is okay to talk about what they notice and what they are trying to understand. We can take the role of listener, and then, after we have done some thinking and questioning about what to say, we can return to the conversation.

This is particularly important if we see something unfair or unkind. Derman-Sparks writes, “If you keep silent, you leave children alone to make sense of a hurtful world. If you wait until you are completely sure of yourself, until you know ‘enough,’ the moment will pass, and the children you work with will have more deeply learned negative attitudes about themselves and others” (2010, p. 19).

At WSMS, we sometimes look at situations by considering the presence of kindness or unkindness. Our children are practiced in identifying unkindness whether it takes the form of aggression or exclusion. We must practice, as well.

Practice making mistakes. Practice listening. Practice opening to other perspectives and truths. Adults are encouraged to create spaces or relationships in which they can practice with relative comfort. Sometimes these safe spaces are affinity spaces, other times they are groups of people who want to reflect and discuss challenging issues—the very issues mainstream culture insists we leave unspoken. At WSMS, we are creating these spaces for practice.

This year, WSMS has a faculty group with nearly thirty members called SEED (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity). Stefanie Eckhart and I lead the two hour discussions with activities and conversations that give participants practice broaching uncomfortable topics. 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 towards 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.”

For example, one SEED exercise invites participants to reflect on their perspectives by simply questioning, reflecting on, and discussing, “Whom was I taught to look down upon?” Everyone is asked to journal, to speak, and to listen. Sometimes we show a video about socio-economic class or racial identity. Participants come away with more self-knowledge, familiarity with their colleagues’ experiences, and awareness that we are all taught, implicitly or explicitly, to rank and classify people. We consider how we automatically categorize people when simply passing them on the street or hearing their voices. Working through this discomfort together helps us to know ourselves better, especially as we interact with children and families in the classroom.

SEED meetings, however, are not always uncomfortable. We are building community and working as partners to learn from and with each other. We are regularly stimulated to approach our community as a place to teach and to learn. SEED meetings can feel empowering—we are in this together! We can support each other! This feeling of support is also the intention of WSMS’s Diversity Council.

The Diversity Council spends less time on self-reflection and more time on implementation and organization. Every Diversity Council member is also in a SEED group, so they are sure to be doing the ‘deeper work’ in that group. The
intention of the Diversity Council is to support classrooms with resources and practices, while putting together a vision for the whole school. In these sessions, we use one another to work through specific classroom happenings, deal with challenging conversations, and develop lessons meeting the needs of a specific child or group of children.

For example, last year on the Diversity Council, we examined each classroom environment and talked through some choices that were clearly well-intentioned, but needed to be re-thought. How were we introducing dolls with disabilities? What messages about gender were our comments on children’s clothing sending? When is it okay for a child to touch a teacher’s hair? These conversations are hard! However, we now see, and continue reminding each other, that these interactions are what will help lead to developing truly anti-bias communities.

Some teachers have expressed the feeling that it’s only getting harder; the more you learn, the more you worry about doing or saying the wrong thing. But we are not asked to do this challenging work alone. We have a community of adults committed to learning more and to supporting our children as best we can. I trust the people who have devoted their professional careers and lives to studying socialization, gender identity, race, etc. I can partner with them and learn from their stories to better understand different experiences, values, and truths.

It’s okay to feel like you don’t know, and it’s important to continue trying to learn more, to think critically, to keep an open mind, to listen to others. It is not helpful, however, to ignore these topics or to imagine that race and difference do not exist. Just think of how important it is for adults to be people who children will come to with questions, with observations, and conversations about how they are making sense of our world. As adults, we can help children think critically, practice kindness, and make accurate meaning.

Last year in ALB, the after-lunch program for the oldest children at WSMS, we spent a few weeks learning about skin-tone. In our first meeting, we heard the ideas WSMS five-year-olds were forming about skin. When asked, “How do you think you got your skin color?” some children responded:

“If you really wanna have a skin color, you have to touch your mom, in her tummy.”
“It happens because your cells decide. The boss cells say what your skin color should be and the worker cells do it.”
“By going in the sun.”
“By standing next to your favorite color and the wind blows it onto you and you close your eyes.”
“Somebody gives you your color when you’re a baby.”
“The people who make the world give the children skin color...”

What an opportunity for teaching, for offering children facts about difference! We extended our conversations from the science of skin-tone to the language some people use to describe different races. We had to prepare for these conversations, but we began with what the children were thinking. The conversations were not easy, but it was clear that the children had a lot to talk about!

If children want to talk about something, we need to listen; if children experience injustice, we need to respond. As a community, let’s accept the discomfort and practice having hard conversations.

RESOURCES

• The National SEED Project. nationalseedproject.org
THE ANNUAL WEST SIDE MONTESSORI SCHOOL AUCTION

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

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2019
7:00 – 11:00PM | THE EDISON BALLROOM | NEW YORK CITY

For over 50 years, we’ve provided 20% of WSMS families (40 or more students) annual tuition support from our financial aid program.
BEHIND THE SCENES: Keeping West Side Montessori School Safe and Effective

Most people who visit WSMS probably do not pay a lot of attention to the facilities. The atmosphere is bright, clean and cheerful … there are no distractions caused by dirt or marks on the walls indicating the need for a paint job, strange smells (at least most of the time), or unusual mechanical noises. For this we are grateful to Amy Stoney, Director of Operations, and Shawn Cumberbatch, Facilities Manager.

What visitors don’t realize is how much goes on behind the scenes and all through the year.

OUR FACILITIES

WSMS bought the double brownstone at 309 West 92nd Street in 1974 from the Calhoun School. Over the years there have been many upgrades and renovations, and the building currently has eight classrooms for children, bathrooms on every level, a full-service kitchen, the library/parents’ room on the first floor, a gym/adult classroom on the fifth floor, outdoor play space on the roof, and office space on multiple levels.

This year we rented and renovated basement space from the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, at 91st Street and West End Avenue, to provide two dedicated classrooms and office space for our thriving Twos Program and WSMS-TEP.

Because every space is utilized every day, the regular daily schedule includes afterschool cleaning of classrooms/gym/offices/restrooms … mopping floors, wiping off furniture, sanitizing the kitchen and bathrooms.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays, the TEP/Concordia classes take place in the gym, so Shawn’s staff is charged with turning the children’s play space into an adult learning center in the late afternoon, then re-configuring it for the kids when the adult classes are over.

The same thing happens on Friday, in the gym and also in the Twos classrooms at the Church, for Saturday TEP classes.

Amy and Shawn also work hand-in-hand with Nikki Chase-Levin and the Parents Association to be sure that facilities are ready for the many events that happen at WSMS.

EVERY FEW MONTHS ...

There is a substantial amount of ongoing maintenance that takes place on a regular basis over the course of the year and has to be fitted into strategic timing—days off, weekends, and early closings:

- all the carpeting is shampooed and the non-carpeted flooring is heavy-cleaned and polished every few months
- at least once a year the laminate classroom flooring is stripped and re-polished
- every three months the kitchen appliances are serviced and the grease trap is cleaned (this needs to be done when the school is empty since it is an unpleasant event!)

A HEctic SUMMER

There are always one-time projects to be accomplished, and for the most part those are scheduled in the summer, when camp occupies only two or three of the eight classrooms and there are far fewer adults around.

This summer’s big projects—aside from the renovation of the Church for the Twos—were:

- installing a new state-of-the-art fire alarm system, inspected and certified by the NYFD, which required running conduit at the rear of the building wired to every classroom (Shawn cleverly realized this was much more efficient than indoor wiring)
- moving all TEP documents and other materials to the Church (where classes were/are held), creating storage opportunities on the fifth floor
- replacing flooring/carpeting in the Garden class and Teachers’ Room in
response to flooding damage
• replacing carpet in all other classrooms and on the stairs (this is usually done every two years)
• replacing laminate with tile in all bathrooms to ensure the floors are waterproof and to enhance cleaning
• fitting all fire escape doors with external key access (before they could only be opened from the inside with a push bar)
• an external power wash, followed by patching/painting the exterior where necessary

SAFETY

For obvious reasons safety is our highest priority. Our daily maintenance ensures that our facilities are sanitary, that children do not have access to anything that could cause them harm, that our passageways are not obstructed, that steps and sidewalks are not slippery in bad weather, and—critically—that the school can be emptied rapidly in case of fire or other emergencies.

Fire drills are critical to school safety. Starting that classroom training is one of the first things teachers do in the fall; the loud noise and strobe lights (part of the new system) in every classroom could be highly upsetting if the children were blindsided by them. We schedule two drills/month, monitored by the New York City Fire Department to ensure timely evacuation to safe locations, and there are always several drills each year where faculty are not given advance notice to ensure that they are not complacent in responding.

But we are not finished …

Having accomplished all this doesn’t mean there is not more to be done in the future. Amy and Shawn are currently contemplating:

• painting the doors and the lobby
• dealing preventatively with winter ice accumulation on the façade, which has previously been addressed by installing special heaters

Ensuring that our children have the best possible place to start their educational journeys means that we have to be thinking ahead and exploring alternatives.

As Mimi says, “Both Shawn and Amy have an incredible ‘can do’ attitude.” WSMS is lucky to have Amy and Shawn on the job.

Amy and Shawn

Amy Stoney joined WSMS in the fall of 2014 as a part-time receptionist and quickly progressed to a full-time member of the admin team. With a hand in many different aspects of the daily operations of WSMS, it seemed a natural progression when she took over the position of Director of Operations in 2017. Amy is still involved in much of the administrative work, but also oversees the kitchen (where she has a strong hand in menu development), facilities and reception staff, and she makes sure classroom teachers have everything they need to do their work. She is a valuable contributor to decisions made regarding building upgrades and construction projects, has been part of the weekly construction meetings since January, and hires and manages the various contractors who do work at school. Before joining WSMS, Amy spent most of her career as nanny or household manager. And in her spare time she has an amazing catering business!

Shawn Cumberbatch joined WSMS in the spring of 2017. He has worked in the facilities/janitorial industry for many years. In 2008 he started his career in Manhattan private schools, where he ran or worked in the facilities departments of Greenwich House/Barrow Street Nursery School and the Brownstone School. As the Facilities Manager at WSMS, he is responsible for the daily maintenance of the building, DOH/DOB/FDNY compliance, safety of building for students and staff and any emergency facility-related issues.

Shawn has a critical and discerning eye around all safety issues. Most days at arrival and dismissal, he is out on the street in front of the building watching the area as families arrive. Caregivers and parents will leave sleeping babies in strollers with him so they can come in to drop off an older child. Shawn also does impromptu safety drills with individual classrooms, offering safety guidance to teachers.

And, in his spare time, Shawn owns and manages his ever-expanding business, IGT Moving and Cleaning Services, which oversees facilities in five buildings throughout the city and provides other services to clients as needed.
**ALUMNI NOTES**

**Anna ('93) and Mary Jane ('96)** Sake-llariadi is a proud alumna and would like to extend her support to current and past WSMS students. Her daughter, **Dylan ('17)**, attended WSMS and is now in Class 1 at PS 199. Dena joined the WSMS fold in fall 2018. Dylan and Izzie love thumbing through Dena’s WSMS yearbooks from the ‘80s and have noticed that many aspects of the school still look the same! Dena works in unscripted television production, currently as Senior Director of Production at Viceland.

**Mikey Verberkmoes ('16)** competed in his first 3x3 Rubik’s Cube competition held by the World Cubing Association on October 21, 2018, in Elmhurst New York. Mikey was the youngest participant in the competition and scored his personal overall best time and highest personal average times during the 3x3 rounds. He was also excited to meet many of the world record holders and to witness several national and North American records being broken that day at the competition! Mikey has two brothers who cheered him on during the competition: **Sammy Verberkmoes (2W)** and **Johnny Verberkmoes ('14)**. His parents, John Verberkmoes and Daria Kim, have recently joined an online support group for parents of Speedcubers.

**Alex Stephan ('11)** graduated from The Parkside School and is now in 6th grade at York Preparatory School. Alex plays hockey year-round, has his junior black belt in karate, and always has his nose in a new book. **Peter Stephan ('14)** will start 3rd grade at PS 199 this fall! He loves being with friends, reading, skiing and solving math problems... Their parents, Kate and David Stephens, wrote, “We miss WSMS!”

**Lily Kurtz ('11)** is a sixth grader at The Hewitt School. Passionate about books, sewing, swimming and skiing, Lily also has a keen interest in marine biology. For the past two summers, she has attended SEACAMP, a marine science camp in San Diego. Fun fact: one of Lily’s closest friends at Hewitt is Penelope Tarr, whom she met in the WSMS Garden classroom.

**Katie ('90)** is Chief of Staff at Bank Street College. **James ('96)** is working in administration at WSMS!! **Annie ('97)** is teaching four-year-olds at DC Prep in Washington and will earn her master’s in educational policy at American University in December. And **Molly ('00)** has just started a position as a co-lead teacher for two- and three-year-olds at C’e Montessori School in Williamsburg. Tina does special projects at WSMS, and serves on the alumni parents committees of Collegiate and Spence. And Mike, who retired as head of a charter school company, is now doing a turnaround for a guardianship agency.

**The Connelly family has a strong connection to education.** **Katie ('90)** is Chief of Staff at Bank Street College. **James ('96)** is working in administration at WSMS!! **Annie ('97)** is teaching four-year-olds at DC Prep in Washington and will earn her master’s in educational policy at American University in December. And **Molly ('00)** has just started a position as a co-lead teacher for two- and three-year-olds at C’e Montessori School in Williamsburg. Tina does special projects at WSMS, and serves on the alumni parents committees of Collegiate and Spence. And Mike, who retired as head of a charter school company, is now doing a turnaround for a guardianship agency.

**Sam Mellins** attended WSMS 2000-2002 and graduated in June 2015 from Hunter College High School. He spent the following year in Israel, in the Shalom Hartman Institute’s Hervuta gap year program in Jerusalem. He is now a rising third year student at the University of Chicago, majoring in history, with a concentration in early modern Europe (think Martin Luther!).

**James ('14) and Josie Rego ('16)** miss WSMS! Both are doing well. After several terrific years at the Trinity School, they transferred to the Windward School on the Upper East Side this fall. The Regos send love to all WSMS’ers!!

**2010 WSMS alumni Lake Gifford, Finn Guillemain, and Perry Hefferren-Harkless** formed a rock band, Uranium Sister, while in middle school at Trinity. The power trio has performed to wide acclaim at school, in basements, and at the West End Lounge. On Saturday, October 13, Uranium Sister made an exclusive appearance on West 92nd Street, doing a set at WSMS’s Fall Festival.
Giulia ('89) and Abigail Pines ('92) went to Trinity School after WSMS. Giulia graduated from Columbia in 2008, and moved to Berlin, Germany, where she lived for almost 10 years, before returning last year. She published four books while there. She has had three articles in the NYT in the last few months (two in the Travel section and one in the Arts section). Abigail graduated from Barnard in 2011 and the Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine in 2016. She interned in the BluePearl Veterinary Partners emergency and specialty hospitals, and started with the Veterinary Emergency Group in August 2018.

Taylor Frazier attended West Side Montessori School from 1995 to 1997, and went to the Brearley School until her family relocated to Pennsylvania in 1999. She graduated from Princeton with an AB cum laude in History in 2014, and earned an MPH in Maternal and Child Health Policy in 2016 at Boston University School of Public Health. After two years with the Community Service Society of New York, she moved to St. Louis, MO, to pursue a JD at Washington University School of Law.

Bastian Canale ('15) is almost eight years old and will be in third grade in the Dual Language program at PS 87 this fall. He is fully bilingual at a native level in both Spanish and English, and is picking up Italian from family. Bastian started learning ASL last year, and loves signing. He has a passion for travelling and sports, and has been to six countries and seven states. Last summer, he spent a month in Ecuador, where he had the opportunity to go to “Galápagos, the most amazing place on earth,” as he calls it. This summer he is at mountain biking camp in a Colorado/Utah, and will join the West Side Soccer League Travel Team this fall. Pursuing a diversity of interests, being strong academically, and able to adapt and enjoy challenges are skills he owes to WSMS. Here is where it all started!

All is well with Alexa and Amelia Citron ('12). They turned 12(!) in September and are now in middle school (6th grade) at Fieldston. They have been at Fieldston since they graduated from WSMS. They enjoy school, have friends, and play sports (soccer in the fall, softball in the spring) and instruments (drums for Amelia, guitar for Alexa). They still live in the neighborhood and always take pleasure in crossing 92nd Street.

In May, Cooper Ramsey ('14) was awarded First Place in the Hal Leonard Vocal Competition in the 12 & Under category. She is the youngest winner in this category at age 9 and her parents couldn’t be more proud! This is a link to the video of her winning submission: https://youtu.be/2S8ffUryyDw

Austin ('04) and Drew ('02) Perlmutter attended this year’s WSMS reunion [Heather P. is between them in photo]. Drew graduated from Bates College this spring and is now teaching in Maine. Austin will be a sophomore at Bates in the fall. Both enjoyed returning to the school and looking through their old yearbooks. Neither realized how many of their high school friends were schoolmates at WSMS!

Isabella España is a 2011 graduate of WSMS (4E). A classical violinist who has played nationally and internationally, Isabella was accepted into the Special Music School (SMS) at the Kaufman Center. She attributes much of her success to WSMS—not only academically, where her experience with the 100s number board helped her become a math whiz, but physically as well. With only one elevator in the building, SMS students must walk-up six flights of stairs. Who knew that treading up to 4E would be the “easiest” commute to school she would ever have?

Riya Pherwani ('17) had a fantastic kindergarten year at Chapin, with fellow WSMSer, Piper Nelson. Adjusting to the school routine and the academics were a breeze with the great foundation laid at WSMS. Even though Riya loves her “big girl” school, she continues to miss her teachers and friends at WSMS and wants to visit on every possible occasion. Her one and only doll has been christened “Kathy” after the beloved Katherine Fordney of 3E. Riya’s mom, Reshma, deals with her own WSMS withdrawal symptoms by volunteering on the WSMS Admissions Committee, while working on her start up, Cordelia Solutions, that helps families figure out how to take care of aging parents.

Lucian Cooke ('17) lives in London and attends The Gower School, a Montessori primary school. He just finished Reception (~Kindergarten). His favorite things are math, reading, high speed trains, Lego and dancing. He fondly recalls his time and friends at WSMS; especially how much he loved Miss Cailyn!

We’d love to hear from you! Please share alumni notes with Sarah Eson, seson@wsmnyc.org.
WEST SIDE MONTESSORI SCHOOL
ANNUAL REPORT OF GIVING
2017-2018
FUNDRAISING RESULTS 2017-2018
(unaudited)

ANNUAL FUND $321,710
AUCTION 272,834
FALL FESTIVAL 5,048

TOTAL RAISED $599,592

2017-2018 REVENUE (unaudited)

- Annual Fund 4%
- Auction 4%
- Tuition, Fees, Government Programs 92%

2017-2018 OPERATING EXPENSES (unaudited)

- Instructional Expense 53%
- Administrative 22%
- Financial Aid 13%
- Building Maintenance 12%
Your Annual Fund Dollars at Work

Annual ongoing expenses include:

- Stipends to teachers who are working towards a Master’s degree in Early Childhood Education continue
- $10,000 of books are purchased annually

Questions? Write us at annualfund@wsmsnyc.org
Began a scholarship program for our teacher education program, WSMS-TEP

Accomplished comprehensive gym renovation!

Expanded our Twos Program to a beautifully renovated new classroom space at 302 West 91st Street

Formed the Faculty Diversity Council, and hired a Diversity Practitioner

Installed new open-ended gym equipment

Questions? Write us at annualfund@wsmsnyc.org

Provided Powerful Interactions coaching for teachers with expert Judy Jablon

Hired an occupational therapist to work in classrooms with teachers

Installed a modern cataloguing and lending system

Partnered with Network of Schools that Heal

Hired dual language learning specialist

Collaberated with a nutritionist to create healthy options

Stipends to teachers who are working towards a Master's degree in Early Childhood Education continue

$10,000 of books are purchased annually

Annual ongoing expenses include:

Installed a modern cataloguing and lending system

Enhanced parent education opportunities, including the addition of a monthly speaker series

Hired an occupational therapist to work in classrooms with teachers

Expanded our Twos Program to a beautifully renovated new classroom space at 302 West 91st Street

Began a scholarship program for our teacher education program, WSMS-TEP

THE WSMS ANNUAL FUND. GIVE FROM THE ❤️ GIVE WHAT YOU CAN.
THE RESULTS ARE IN!
WSMS Annual Fund 2018 Survey

In the spring, the Annual Fund Committee distributed an Annual Fund survey to current families. We are grateful to the 77 individuals who shared their thoughtful replies with us! Comprised of volunteer parents in the school, the Annual Fund Committee looks forward to using this information to plan for the coming year’s campaigns. Thank you for your help!

How much of an impact do you feel your donation to the WSMS Annual Fund would make?

- A lot: 82%
- A moderate amount: 23%
- A little: 5%
- None at all: 0%
- Unsure: 0%

How familiar are you with the WSMS Annual Fund?

- Very familiar: 51%
- Somewhat familiar: 47%
- Not at all familiar: 2%
- Unsure: 0%

Which of the following facts about the Annual Fund are you aware of?

- Annual Fund pledges must be fulfilled by the end of the fiscal year: 64%
- The end of the fiscal year at WSMS is June 30th: 52%
- All Annual Fund contributions are fully tax-deductible: 88%
- Contributions may be made in the form of securities: 44%
- The Annual Fund’s twin goals this year are to raise $300K and gain 100% participation from families enrolled in the school: 49%
- The Match Drive raises money for the Annual Fund: 64%
- The Fall Festival, Auction, and Hooked on Books do NOT raise money for the Annual Fund: 58%
- Many employers will match contributions to the WSMS Annual Fund: 64%

60% believe the process of giving to the Annual Fund has been very easy.

82% believe the outreach from the Annual Fund team this year has been just right.
We think the Annual Fund is a great fiscal catalyst that enables various students to attend WSMS, and we’re just grateful that our daughter was able to attend and be a part of a nurturing school environment."

“To help another family as we were helped."

“WSMS has had a profound positive impact on our children, instilling a sense of community, a love of learning, and a confidence we are so happy and grateful to see nurtured. We want to support WSMS to express our gratitude and to enable the continuation of this wonderful school.”

“I love the mission and philosophy of the school and would love to see the school continue to serve the community.”

“Supporting WSMS in any capacity very important to us.”

“I am a recipient of financial aid and if it wasn’t for others’ financial contributions to the annual fund, my son and I would not have had the opportunity to attend such an amazing school. The education he received was priceless and the community was a very special bonus. I give what I can, Once I am in a better financial position, I will give more because I want the next deserving child to have the same experience without the burden of not being able to afford it.”

“To give back to a school that has given so much to us, to help make WSMS available to other families through financial aid, and to help improve the school.”

“WSMS provides such an amazing education to children and I know that cannot happen without funding for all aspects of the school—big and small.”

“We’re happy with our decision to send our daughter here and want to help ensure that future students have a similar high quality experience.”

“I feel like my whole family benefits tremendously from our experience being part of the WSMS community and I am deeply supportive of its mission, including financial aid/economic diversity.”

“To provide support for the school beyond what is covered by tuition and provide funds for the financial aid program.”

“It is very important for us to give to the school that has given so much to our family. That means helping teachers receive the training they need, as well as providing salaries appropriate for such highly-qualified and well-deserving faculty and staff. We feel like WSMS as a whole bends over backwards to help our family in such an array of areas.”

“Having been a part of WSMS for many years, we’ve seen the impact these dollars make.”

“We know that tuition does not cover the full cost of operating the school.”

“To ensure that the community continues to grow and help as many children and families as possible.”

“It’s a great community builder in the sense anyone can contribute anything and it helps with the school’s operating expenses.”

“It is a great school that does smart things with the fund. We love WSMS!!”

“To support the school and the students who attend financially, and to participate in the community we have committed to as a family.”

“I feel there is a direct impact on my son’s education and experience at WSMS.”

Please tell us in your own words why you choose to donate to the WSMS Annual Fund:

“We think the Annual Fund is a great fiscal catalyst that enables various students to attend WSMS, and we’re just grateful that our daughter was able to attend and be a part of a nurturing school environment.”

“WSMS has had a profound positive impact on our children, instilling a sense of community, a love of learning, and a confidence we are so happy and grateful to see nurtured. We want to support WSMS to express our gratitude and to enable the continuation of this wonderful school.”

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“Having been a part of WSMS for many years, we’ve seen the impact these dollars make.”

“We know that tuition does not cover the full cost of operating the school.”

“To ensure that the community continues to grow and help as many children and families as possible.”

“It’s a great community builder in the sense anyone can contribute anything and it helps with the school’s operating expenses.”

“It is a great school that does smart things with the fund. We love WSMS!!”

“To support the school and the students who attend financially, and to participate in the community we have committed to as a family.”

“I feel there is a direct impact on my son’s education and experience at WSMS.”

Please tell us in your own words why you choose to donate to the WSMS Annual Fund:

“We think the Annual Fund is a great fiscal catalyst that enables various students to attend WSMS, and we’re just grateful that our daughter was able to attend and be a part of a nurturing school environment.”

“WSMS has had a profound positive impact on our children, instilling a sense of community, a love of learning, and a confidence we are so happy and grateful to see nurtured. We want to support WSMS to express our gratitude and to enable the continuation of this wonderful school.”

“I love the mission and philosophy of the school and would love to see the school continue to serve the community.”

“Supporting WSMS in any capacity very important to us.”

“I am a recipient of financial aid and if it wasn’t for others’ financial contributions to the annual fund, my son and I would not have had the opportunity to attend such an amazing school. The education he received was priceless and the community was a very special bonus. I give what I can, Once I am in a better financial position, I will give more because I want the next deserving child to have the same experience without the burden of not being able to afford it.”

“To give back to a school that has given so much to us, to help make WSMS available to other families through financial aid, and to help improve the school.”

“WSMS provides such an amazing education to children and I know that cannot happen without funding for all aspects of the school—big and small.”

“We’re happy with our decision to send our daughter here and want to help ensure that future students have a similar high quality experience.”

“I feel like my whole family benefits tremendously from our experience being part of the WSMS community and I am deeply supportive of its mission, including financial aid/economic diversity.”

“To provide support for the school beyond what is covered by tuition and provide funds for the financial aid program.”

“It is very important for us to give to the school that has given so much to our family. That means helping teachers receive the training they need, as well as providing salaries appropriate for such highly-qualified and well-deserving faculty and staff. We feel like WSMS as a whole bends over backwards to help our family in such an array of areas.”

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2018

Very special thanks to the WSMS faculty and the WSMS parent photographers, who provided many of the articles and photos used in this magazine, and to the WSMS administrative team, who helped in ways too numerous to count.

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