



THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF WSMS-TEP

A Masterful Approach

This year WSMS is delighted to welcome Lisanne Pinciotti, MEd, as Program Director of WSMS-TEP, our on-site teacher education program. Lisanne has been involved in Montessori education since 1985, serving in a wide range of capacities, including teaching, administration, curriculum design, and policy planning. Here, Lisanne offers an overview of how she got to WSMS-TEP and a snapshot of what's in the pipeline for this exciting and ever expanding program.

What brought you to teaching, to Montessori, to teaching teachers?

When I was growing up, my mother always told me I would be a teacher. Many of the women in my family worked outside the home, and they were mainly nurses and teachers. I was determined to become someone "different" and follow a less traditional path. I earned a BS in Business Administration at the University of Dayton, which I found challenging and exciting. "Learn, Lead, and Serve" was the motto of UD at the time, and it was fostered in and out of the classrooms. Once I graduated and started working, however, I really missed the routine and the powerful interactions I had felt within a learning environment.

I "discovered" Montessori several years later while pursuing a master's degree in Early Childhood Education at Rutgers University's Graduate School of Education. One of the early courses required us to observe in a variety of early childhood settings, including at least one Montessori school. That first visit was the typical "aha!" moment that many Montessori teachers—and parents—describe. I found children and adults working harmoniously, both independently and in small groups. There was a focus on organization of classroom and curriculum that seemed unique to me. I remember thinking, "This is how it should be," as I watched the joyful approach to learning in that room.

Fast forward 20 years, and I'd finished early childhood training at the Center for Montessori Education (CMTE)/NY, completed my master's at Rutgers, my husband Dino and I had three daughters, and I was working at Children's House Montessori in Highland Park, NJ. Besides being a mother, I wore many hats: teacher, financial administrator, curriculum coordinator, and parent education presenter. CMTE/NY invited me to

join them as a field consultant for interns. I worked in the New Jersey satellite for nearly 20 years, eventually serving as Academic and Curriculum Coordinator of the New Jersey location until it closed last year.

And what brought you to WSMS-TEP?

I have been fortunate to meet and work with many wonderful people throughout my Montessori career; one of the people I met along the way was Mimi Basso. The TEP position is an exciting opportunity to use my broad experience and love of Montessori in a new way. And I am grateful to have this chance to work with the dedicated and enthusiastic faculty of both the school and the training program. I look forward to WSMS-TEP's ongoing growth and improvement as we continue to build a "master"-ful approach to Montessori teacher education.

What programs does WSMS-TEP offer today?

WSMS-TEP currently offers two programs: one leading to an American Montessori Society (AMS) Early Childhood (ages 2.6 to 6 years) credential, and one leading to an AMS Infant & Toddler (birth to age 3) credential. WSMS-TEP is affiliated with AMS and is accredited by the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE), the international standard-setting and accrediting body for Montessori teacher education. Because of the deep reflection and inquiry that the accreditation process entails, adult learners who graduate from our programs

WHAT IS WSMS-TEP?

Only four years after WSMS was founded, the school administrators recognized a clear need for formalized training in Montessori early childhood education in the New York area. The Montessori approach was not widespread in the '60s, although it had a strong and successful foothold in Europe. There were few places in the U.S. where credentialed early childhood teachers or individuals interested in early childhood education could learn the Montessori method.

Founded in 1967 as Central Harlem Association of Montessori Parents (CHAMP), the West Side Montessori School-Teacher Education Program (WSMS-TEP) is a program that prepares adults to become effective, responsive Montessori teachers capable of helping young children reach their full potential. Taught in WSMS classrooms on weekends and during school breaks, WSMS-TEP offers a supportive learning environment in which adult students work together with experienced, highly qualified Montessori educators, some of whom are graduates of WSMS-TEP themselves, while others bring additional perspective from training programs around the country.

WSMS STUDENT TEACHERS CURRENTLY ENROLLED IN WSMS-TEP

Rebecca Estomago, 4W
 Akwanza Gleaves, 2E
 Amanda Hopson, 4W
 Claire McGinley, 2W
 Rachel Milano, 3Wam
 Divya Narang, 4Eam
 Lauren Sprouse, 3E
 Nicole Valenti, 3Wpm
 Cara Zelas, 4Epm
 Nicole Zerafa, Garden

WSMS TEACHERS CURRENTLY TEACHING IN WSMS-TEP

Mimi Basso, Head of School
Infant Toddler, Philosophy, Pedagogy, Observation

Karen Deinzer, Head Teacher 1W
Infant Toddler: Environmental Design, Child/Family and Community

Katherine Fordney, Head Teacher 3E
Mathematics, Cultural Subjects

Melissa Freeman, Associate Head of School
Philosophy, Observation, Practical Life, Sensorial, Classroom Leadership

Thana Khouli, Assistant Teacher 4W
Cultural Subjects

Donna Longdon, Head Teacher 4W
Student Teaching Seminar

Margot Mack, Head Teacher 2E LAP, Art Specialist
Art

Robyn Mernick, Head Teacher 4Eam
Language, Peace

Marcia Polanco, Assistant Teacher 3Wam
Cultural Subjects

Gelsey Steinbrecher, Head Teacher 4Eam
Mathematics



are not only well prepared to work in infant, toddler, and early childhood environments, but their credentials are nationally and internationally recognized, allowing them to work in Montessori programs worldwide.

Last year was an exciting one for WSMS-TEP, as the inaugural cohort of eight Infant/Toddler adult students graduated in June and are now working in area schools. This year we have 10 students in the Infant/Toddler program and 42 students in the Early Childhood program.

How does WSMS-TEP benefit current students at WSMS?

WSMS-TEP provides a steady supply of excellent, qualified teachers for the children of our school. Many people enrolled in TEP do their student teaching in our classrooms, and some graduates are hired to fill the openings we have for new faculty each year. A number of seasoned WSMS faculty members teach in the WSMS-TEP program, thus gaining an opportunity to hone their Montessori skills in their role as TEP instructors, and ensuring continuity in style and approach in the student teachers. Truly, this is a case of everyone benefiting from the program, but ultimately it is the children who benefit the most.

Beginning this fall, WSMS-TEP students (48 of whom are doing their internships in classrooms at WSMS and other schools) will be able to receive the credits they obtain for their Montessori certification toward a master's degree in Early Childhood Education. How does that work?

The Montessori/Concordia dual master's degree in Early Childhood & Special Education is designed specifically for Montessori teachers who have earned a bachelor's degree and who are seeking state certification in order to qualify for a head teacher position in New York State. Concordia College (located in Bronxville, NY) has agreed to accept up to 15 WSMS-TEP credits toward its 46-credit master's degree. As a result, credentialed Montessori teachers are eligible to apply for the program and need to earn only 31 additional credits toward their degree. Better still, the program offers a significant per-credit tuition reduction for those remaining credits. Courses will be taught by Concordia College faculty at WSMS, making it easier for our interns and faculty to participate.

This new opportunity is a real benefit for 11 of our current WSMS teachers, who want to grow professionally and enhance their state teaching credentials. In addition, the program defines WSMS-TEP as a collaborative partner and resource within the wider Montessori community.

What are the plans for the future of WSMS-TEP?

Besides continuing refinement to our curriculum and programs, and the new partnership with Concordia College, we are working on a professional development program for Montessori-credentialed teachers. AMS now requires that teachers earn a minimum of 50 hours of professional development within 10 years in order to renew their teaching credential. I believe that high-quality opportunities are needed to ensure continuing competence in the classroom, enhanced understanding of Montessori materials, the needs of today's children, and the importance of building partnerships with families. WSMS-TEP is in a position to share the expertise of our faculty and administration with teachers and schools in the metropolitan area to meet these goals.

WSMS-TEP TEACHER MARIA GRAVEL TO RECEIVE AMS AWARD



The Infant/Toddler Program recognizes and celebrates the hard work and dedication of Maria Gravel, esteemed WSMS-TEP faculty member and longtime Montessori advocate at Seton Day Care and Preschool on East 92nd Street. Maria is the recipient of the 2014 American Montessori Society Living Legacy award and will be recognized as such at the 2015 AMS Annual Conference in Philadelphia. As an accredited Montessori school and teacher education program, we look forward to the celebration in Philadelphia to recognize Maria's accomplishments and her unique contributions to the Montessori community of children, families, teachers, schools, and teacher education programs.

The Living Legacy award is an annual tribute to an individual whose dedication and leadership have made a lasting impact on the AMS community. Our Head of School, Mimi Basso, is current chairperson for the Living Legacy Scholarship Committee, which awards scholarships to aspiring Montessori educators at AMS-affiliated teacher education programs.