ENHANCING OUR GYM…
WHILE CREATING A MULTI-USE SPACE FOR ADULT LEARNING AND GATHERING

New Yorkers know that in this city a building’s footprint is destiny. But West Side Montessori School leaders—armed with vision, ingenuity and the support of an experienced architectural team that knows how to maximize floor space and ceiling height—have pushed back against that truism yet again. WSMS is no stranger to this kind of transformation. In 2012 we created a beautiful and highly efficient multi-purpose space that combined a children’s library, a classroom space for our “After Lunch Bunch,” and a meeting room for parents and teachers, from what had previously been a single-purpose space called the Parents’ Room.

We have been working with an architect for several months on the design to transform our already exceptional gym for children into a multi-purpose space, and we are delighted that it will be fully functional by mid-September 2015.

A Single-Use Space Transformed
The renovation of our gym will not only maintain the exceptional gym experience that our children enjoy every day, it will enhance that experience! For example, we know that children love to climb. While they may not be conscious of the benefits climbing provides to developing core strength and large motor development, we certainly are. To that end, we’re adding a splendid, proven to engage, cargo net (the grid structure in the far right corner of the gym rendering). The technology is simple, while the joy and benefits it brings to children are immeasurable.

Once completed, here’s how the 2,000 square feet on the fifth floor will “expand” to serve all of the members of the WSMS community. Our fifth floor will be:

- A classroom space for 50 adult WSMS-TEP students
  WSMS–TEP—our teacher education program that provides Montessori Early Childhood and Infant/Toddler certification for more than 50 students each year—is growing significantly. Although it may not be readily visible to our parent community, this program benefits our school in three important ways:

  1. Student teachers intern in our Multi-Age and Twos Program classes, providing additional adult interactions. We choose our student teachers after having the benefit of getting to know them well through their work.

  2. WSMS master faculty are hired to teach in WSMS-TEP, providing them with career and professional development benefits as well as with the opportunity to supplement their income.

  3. WSMS-TEP allows us to extend the benefits of our highly respected approach to Montessori education beyond our walls. Our graduates are hired in Montessori schools across the country and abroad.

- An auditorium and gathering space for WSMS parents
  WSMS has long wanted to provide a more extensive speakers program for parents and community members, but lacked a large enough gathering space to accommodate them; now we will be able to do so. In addition, this new layout provides a much more comfortable setting for curriculum nights, parent orientations,
admissions open houses, and for getting current and alumni families together to celebrate community and reunite with friends.

- **Two windowed meeting spaces on the balcony level**
  These too will have many purposes, including admissions interviews, parent-teacher conferences, faculty and/or staff meetings, and more.

- **An adult bathroom**
  As of now there are only two adult bathrooms located on the Garden level. Need we say more?

- **Enhanced storage to support Parents Association activities**
  Our volunteers make a tremendous contribution to the culture and spirit of our school. Simplifying access to stored materials needed to support the many activities that take place during our school year is an absolute necessity. Note the moveable ladder on the storage wall to the far right of the rendering; even little things make a huge difference.

Mimi Basso, our Head of School, explains: “I firmly believe that maintaining excellence is a product of knowing our mission, examining our performance, and making continuous improvements. WSMS promises that every day will make a difference for every child—for that, we need an integrated and highly functioning community of teachers, parents, staff and administrators. My job is to make sure that they have the best facilities to work within.”