



## BIG STEPS AT WSMS-TEP

Most WSMS parents are aware that, in addition to providing “where to begin” for some 200-plus children every year, we also run a series of programs for adult learners to become credentialed Montessori educators. Indeed, we benefit from the presence of WSMS-TEP student teachers in our classrooms and draw from TEP alumni when we have openings.

During this 2017-18 school year, we will celebrate the 50th year that our teacher education program has been in existence. Over the years much has changed, and we have recently seen an exciting acceleration of the opportunities available.

### SO...WHAT HAS BEEN GOING ON?

For many years WSMS-TEP offered the Montessori Early Childhood credential—because, of course, WSMS was an Early Childhood school.

In the fall of 2013 WSMS began the Twos Program; TEP had begun to offer the Infant Toddler credential the year before.

Mimi Basso was a WSMS-TEP instructor long

before she became Head of School, and she has a creative vision grounded in that historical perspective about where WSMS-TEP might go. Expanding to Infant Toddler was a first step. But being Head of School is more than a full-time position, so her bigger dreams for TEP were by necessity on the “back burner.” Lisanne Pinciotti, Director of WSMS-TEP, arrived in 2014 with a complementary vision about what TEP could be and the energy and commitment to make changes happen.

Every year 10 to 15 WSMS teachers are also TEP faculty or support staff. Lisanne knew that WSMS faculty are strongly bonded with their fellow teachers and identify deeply as members of that classroom community, and she was initially focused on helping the TEP faculty develop the cohesive and collaborative structure which would allow them to identify within TEP as well, generating a similar environment that fosters the brainstorming and feedback essential to an evolving system.

Lisanne and Mimi were also crucially aware of the expanding need (throughout the world!) for high quality Montessori educators over a broader range of ages and ex-

perience than just Early Childhood. Over its history TEP has consistently been accredited by MACTE (Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education) and affiliated with AMS (American Montessori Society), and meeting their standards has guaranteed that TEP has been in the forefront of high quality professional education. With the support of MACTE and AMS, growing our program was the right thing to do.

In addition, through AMS WSMS has been a popular destination for visits from international Montessori educators, and we have received many inquiries from international students looking to earn their Montessori certifications.

Fast forward to the 2016 NYSAIS re-accreditation process and the concurrent development of a new Strategic Plan. For the first time, TEP had its own section—a clear demonstration of the importance TEP now holds in the school’s operations. The objectives in the new plan reflect Lisanne’s aspirations and—in certain cases—work she had already begun: developing and implementing new credential levels and continuing education/professional development opportunities,

expanding access via scholarship funding and sponsorship of foreign students, and using videos and conference sessions to increase awareness to potential students.

### MORE OPTIONS FOR TEACHERS

The WSMS-TEP program is now twice as big as it was only a year ago, thanks to the implementation of the Elementary I and I-II and Administrator credentials. (See the sidebar for a list of credentials offered.)

Montessori training takes place in two phases: the academic and the practicum (student teaching). The length of each depends on the credential. In most cases the academic takes place over several concentrated weeks in the summer, and/or on weekends throughout the school year. There are some online options as well. Many, but far from all, students do their practicums at WSMS. Most classes are held at WSMS, though the Elementary classes take place at Metropolitan Montessori School on West 85th Street, allowing TEP to use age-appropriate materials and classrooms. Attaining a credential takes 12-18 months on average.

A team of four spent six months analyzing and developing the Elementary program: creating the syllabus, defining the course requirements, identifying the necessary classroom resources (written materials and videos). MACTE and AMS have approved the initial implementation of the Elementary I and I-II credentials. The curriculum for the Elementary I and I-II programs, unsurprisingly, overlap. MACTE and AMS recently approved the proposal for a separate Elementary II credential (9-12 years old), which we will pursue in the future.

Sheba Kapur was hired as Elementary Level Coordinator. She taught at Brooklyn Heights Montessori School, which has pre-K through 8th grade classes. Sheba and Lianne wrote a thorough self-study exploring the Elementary programs. In 2018 an AMS team will be on-site, both at WSMS and at the various student teacher practicum locations, for an in-depth review to confirm the breadth and veracity of the self-study.

### ADDING THE ADMINISTRATOR CREDENTIAL

The expanding growth in Montessori schools has also fostered a growing need for Montessori-accredited administrators.

Beverly Smith was hired as Assistant Head of School in 2016, with the specific goal of developing an AMS-credentialed Administrator course. At her former school, Bev, as head, was faced with the difficult task of

“turning it around”; and AMS recruited her to work on their Emerging Leaders Fellowship Program. Her deep understanding of the role of the administrator has been key to her development of the Administrator credential with Lianne. In February, they submitted that self-study to AMS.

With AMS approval, WSMS-TEP instituted the Administrator program in the summer of 2017 with eight students. The curriculum has three options, depending on the student's background:

- *Model 1: for administrators with Montessori administrative experience but no Montessori teacher credential*
- *Model 2: for administrators with a Montessori teacher credential but no Montessori administrative experience*
- *Model 3: for administrators with no Montessori administrative experience and no Montessori teacher credential*

The curriculum focuses on the adult version of Montessori as parents know it in their children's classrooms:

- *the essential principles of responsibility, respect and independence*
- *an environmental structure of order balanced with freedom*
- *positive communication*

### BUT HOW DOES A TEP STUDENT PAY FOR THIS?

The good news is that many schools provide funding for their faculty and administrators to pursue academic credentials. But someone who is not currently employed in a supporting school can face a substantial cash outlay (the cost of TEP credential programs ranges from \$7,200 to \$12,900). Some scholarship funding has historically been available through AMS.

The better news is that financial aid is now available through WSMS-TEP for qualified students. At its May 2017 meeting, the WSMS Board allocated funds to support a new scholarship program. These funds supplement the generous donation of a WSMS family who donated TEP tuition for three African-American students in this current year.

### INTERNATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Another big step is that we now have the ability to issue Form I-20 to accepted international students. This allows the student to apply for an F-1 visa to study in the United States. The visa is good for one year, and renewable for a second year, and allows the student to complete the academic and practicum parts of the TEP program. This year we

## 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 primarily 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.





## Montessori Credentials Offered at WSMS-TEP:

- Infant Toddler: birth to age 3
- Early Childhood: age 2.6 through 6
- Elementary I: age 6 through 9
- Elementary I-II: age 6 through 12
- Administrator

have Giulia Lindsay from England and Shang Yi Chou from Taiwan enrolled in the Elementary I program. As the availability of the F-1 becomes more widely known, we expect to expand our roster of international students in the coming years. We have already had inquiries from Pakistan, Spain and India.

For several years, we have had a relationship with iHommy International Day Care in Beijing. iHommy currently has five small schools, which offer Montessori Infant Toddler programs in an English-speaking environment. Our goal—and challenge—has been to create a culturally appropriate teacher education program for iHommy to offer locally to their own teachers and those from other schools. This summer WSMS-TEP faculty members Karen Deinzer and Tara Greaney spent a month training local faculty; they also made a presentation at a conference in Shanghai. There have been similar programs at iHommy in past years. Because there is a three-year experience requirement before a Montessori teacher can train other teachers, WSMS-TEP will be providing that training in Beijing for several more years. Our long-term goal is to maintain an ongoing consulting relationship with iHommy.

We also have an ongoing relationship with schools in Vietnam, and are exploring opportunities for a teacher exchange program with them.

## ANYTHING ELSE GOING ON?

As if this did not keep the TEP staff busy enough:

- This summer WSMS-TEP ran a satellite Infant Toddler credential program in Whitehouse Station, NJ. Two new TEP faculty began training the teachers who will staff a former daycare facility which is transforming into a Montessori school.
- Lisanne is modifying work done by the WSMS faculty with Judy Jablon (founder and executive director of Leading for Children at Bank Street College) on evaluations (self, peer and leadership) for use by the TEP faculty.
- The bulk of the summer sessions were videotaped to facilitate online learning options.
- Melissa Freeman (former Associate Head of School at WSMS and TEP Early Childhood Sensorial teacher) began creating online modules for the Philosophy course. Every student working toward a credential is required to take this course; a separate Overview course is required for Infant Toddler and Elementary students who do not have that credential. These online modules will expand the possibilities for potential students to begin coursework off-site.
- Work has begun on an AMS “Montessori Inclusion Endorsement” in Special Education. This new program would require an additional 158 classroom hours and be an “add on” to the age-specific teaching credential. Several faculty already have MAs in Special Ed, and they will work with classroom SEITs (Special Education Itinerant Teachers) to identify how to use those professional inter-relationships to identify and support children at risk, and to develop a course for credentialed Montessori teachers. The endorsement program will allow WSMS-TEP to offer continuing professional development to credentialed teachers.
- In addition to filing for accreditation of the Elementary and Administrator programs, the Infant Toddler and Early Childhood programs submitted the self-studies to renew MACTE accreditation last June. In this way, all levels will be going through the on-site process during next school year.

## A MONTESSORI MATCH: CONGRATULATING DAVE AND STEFANIE ECKERT!

We are thrilled to congratulate WSMS teachers—and WSMS-TEP graduates—Dave and Stefanie Eckert (née Allen) on their recent marriage.

Stefanie (3Wam/3Wpm), originally from Philadelphia, and Dave (4W/LAP), from upstate New York, met during the WSMS-TEP Early Childhood summer program, and became friends during Saturday classes and while supporting each other through rigorous seminars. After TEP, Dave taught in Brooklyn, while Stefanie had a short stint in California. Stefanie returned to the East Coast when she was offered a job as a teacher at WSMS, and Dave happily came on board the following year.

As the faculty and staff will tell you, Dave and Stefanie were notably quiet and relaxed about their relationship. Mimi jokes that they were rarely even seen on the same side of the room! But everyone who knows them agrees that they are a great team who complement each other well. Katherine Fordney (3E), who instructed Dave and Stefanie in their Math course, described the couple as a “dynamic addition equation.” Dave and Stefanie were married on August 18, 2017, in a small ceremony with a rooftop celebration.

