



BLUEBIRD BULLETIN

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Parent Month at Montessori in Redlands Parent/Child Night

Let your child take you to school on Parent/Child Night and



show you for themselves how they spend their day at MIR.

Children love this opportunity to show off the work they've done and the skills they've learned. They love the entertainment of watching their parents struggle through the work they have mastered themselves.

Parent/Child Night will be held Thursday, March 7, 5-7 PM. **School closes at 5 PM that day.** If you have more than one child at MIR, the schedule gives time to rotate classrooms and work with each child one-on-one. Teachers will be on hand to guide the children.

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What makes Montessori *Montessori*?

By MAURA JOYCE, HEAD OF SCHOOL

"It is the child who makes the man, and no man exists who was not made by the child he once was."—Maria Montessori

This time of year the office is inundated with families looking at our school. They come because they have heard about us and want to see if this is the place for their children. One of the first questions we ask inquiring parents is "what do you know about Montessori?" The answers vary from "nothing" to "a little bit" to lengthy and elaborate descriptions of ideas and materials.

What makes Montessori *Montessori*? It is an interesting question, trying to get at the essence of what makes a Montessori school different from others. If we were to ask each of the parents at MIR to share their understanding of Montessori, we would get lots of answers, each a little bit different.

Over the years I have heard:

- "Montessori is hands-on work."
- "It is children working at their own pace."
- "Montessori is beautiful material for the students to explore with."
- "Montessori has great teachers."
- "It is independence and free choice."
- "Montessori is a friendly community."
- "In Montessori children love to learn."



All of the responses correctly describe elements of a Montessori education. MIR has all of these "things", but it is the *philosophy* and the *spirit* of Montessori that makes it the great school that it is.

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A little bird told me...PTM News and Notes

By THE MIR PTM BOARD

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE PTM

The PTM Board thanks all parents for your support. We could not sponsor all of the activities arranged for the benefit of MIR and its students without you. Here are some of the things PTM sponsors: Books for the Positive Discipline parenting class, Staff Appreciation Breakfast, Spring Gala sponsorship and tickets for teachers, staff lunch in August and for one staff in-service, Fall Carnival, Spring Carnival, Back to School Night, and more! All our families help to make MIR a fun and productive community.

FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGNS

Order from Innisbrook at Any Time

Low on wrapping paper? Need a gift? You can order through Innisbrook throughout the school year at innisbrook.com. Our school code is 102074. Orders placed online will be shipped directly to your home. PTM receives 40% of all sales, money that is reinvested in MIR community activities such as the Spring Carnival coming up on May 4.

Take the Time to Save a Dime

Thank you to all the families who have collected and provided Box Tops, one of the simplest ways to raise funds for MIR. Box Tops are located on many of the items you may use every day—and each one is worth 10 cents for the school. For submissions made the last 6 months we have already received almost \$400!

For more information on the Box Tops for Education program, contact Annie Rumary (annie@onpressprinting.com) or Jen Burrows (jlynn05@me.com), or visit boxtops4education.com.

Community News: City of Redlands Starts New Park across from MIR

Following several years' planning, the City of Redlands has begun work on a multipurpose park at the corner of Orange and Nevada avenues across from MIR's main campus.

While some plans remain in development, current plans include a 150- to 200-person capacity amphitheater (the semi-circular dirt mound now visible), "zone transition" structures, a riparian zone, a Native American "village," an ethno-botanical and water conservation demonstration garden, a



Zanja reconstruction area, an archeological dig, a vineyard, a replicated water wheel and a historic citrus grove. The proximity to MIR and The Grove School will provide excellent educational opportunities for students of both schools. For more information, read the *Daily Facts* article at redlandsdailyfacts.com/news/ci_22141775/plans-heritage-park-redlands-unveiled.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Bluebird Skate Night

Please join us for another night of skating and fun on Friday, April 5, 5-7 PM at Cal Skate in Grand Terrace. Tickets are available in the office up until 4 PM that day for \$6 each, or \$8 at the door.

Cal Skate will not charge an entrance fee for children or adults not skating. They do have skates available for toddlers as small as size 9. This event is open to all MIR, Farm and Grove students as well as any friends and family they would like to bring as their guests.

We look forward to seeing you there for some fun social time together!

Bluebird Day is Friday, March 22

Show your school pride and wear your **Bluebird t-shirts!** A variety of t-shirt styles and sweatshirts are now available. Price varies according to style. Visit the MIR office to browse and buy shirts.

Keep Your Statements

Please keep your monthly statements for tax purposes. MIR does not provide an end-of-year statement. We have designed our statements to provide information needed for taxes.

Report from the Board

Continuing the Montessori Journey 2013-14

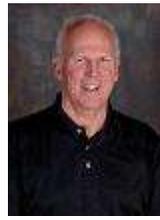
BY MICHELE VERCOSKI, MEMBER

Well, it is that time of year again and the question we must all address: Will you re-enroll your child for the 2013-2014 Montessori in Redlands school year? For some families, this is no-brainer. For others, it may be a question prompting much reflection on variables such as finances, quality of education, and maybe even being skeptical of the Montessori Method. I know this because my husband and I frequently have fielded questions from skeptical family members and friends. Although I cannot know all of the issues that each of you face in answering this question, I can share my experience as I encourage you to re-enroll your child.

As a busy mother to three wonderful children, I am confident that my children are benefiting from my commitment to their individual journeys through Montessori. Sure, my husband and I make sacrifices to afford the tuition. I even drive past the public school that's right down the street from my house in my mad rush to get my children to MIR on time. But I know that my children's learning environment is based upon a choice that I've made, rather than basing their education on what everyone else does. After many years of ongoing research and being on the fence with my oldest son, I came to the conclusion that MIR is the smartest choice, academically speaking. And in the years that have followed, I have never regretted that choice.

What I love the most about the academic setting is the same thing that makes those of us educated in a traditional setting nervous: Montessori follows the child, not an arbitrary curriculum. By following your child's cues, Montessori naturally teaches what your child is ready to learn, when they are ready and capable of learning it. Does this mean that if my child is excited about reading, but could care less about math, that I will have a 5 year old who cannot count? Maybe. But does this mean he will never learn to count? Of course not! Having three children with different academic interests and personalities, I've seen many different variables in their experiences and progression, but there remains

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Curriculum Matters

by PETER DAVIDSON,
ASSISTANT HEAD OF SCHOOL

Getting Your Money's Worth at MIR

*"The mind is not a vessel to be filled but a fire to be kindled."—
Plutarch*

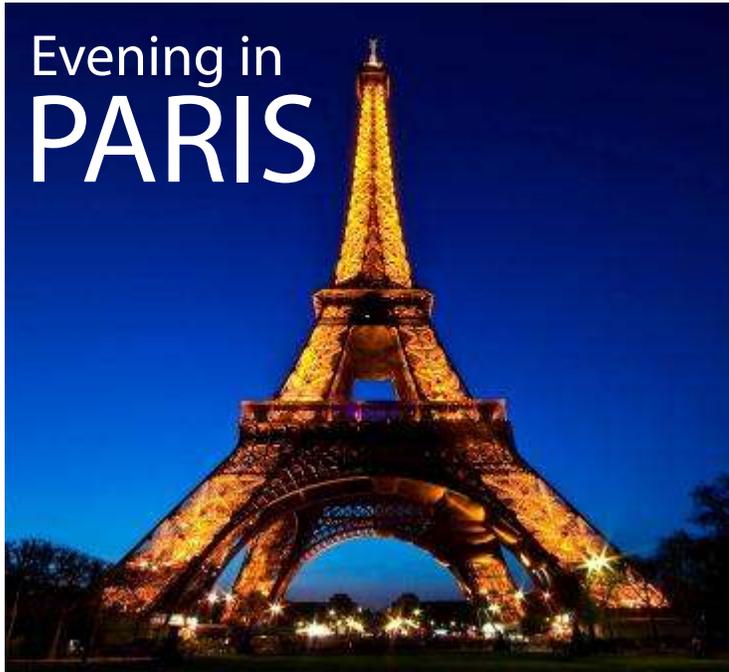
It's time to consider re-enrollment for the 2013-2014 school year, so I thought I would address a financial question—how do you make sure you get your money's worth at MIR? The short answer is, by allowing your child to complete the three-year cycle in the Montessori classroom. By staying for the third year you get the full benefit of the first two years of effort and expense. We held a parent evening last month on this very topic, using the language area as an example.

As you may recall from an earlier *Bluebird Bulletin* article ("The Joy of Discovery", October 2012), often in Montessori a larger skill is broken down into smaller component skills. The activities in the classroom allow a child to gradually accumulate all of those component skills until the day when he or she puts them all together to *discover* the larger skill for him- or herself. It is typically not until they begin their third year that they have enough confidence in the larger skill to begin to expand upon it and cement it through extensions and practice.

In the case of reading and writing, the component skills fall into two categories: preparation of the hand, and preparation of the mind. Under preparation of the child's hand, we have the many exercises of practical life, such as washing, polishing, and dusting, which refine the child's arm movement from shoulder through fingers to conform to a left-to-right/top-to-bottom motion. Sensorial exercises such as the cylinder block are topped with knobs of the same thickness as a pencil. While the child is refining visual discrimination of dimension, he is also exercising and strengthening his pencil grip! In the metal inset work, the child fills in a geometric shape with a color pencil, but in a certain way—with one continuous line, staying within the shape and moving up and down, left to right—exactly as

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From the MIR Development Office



Spring Gala is *très magnifique!*

Thank you to everyone who attended An Evening in Paris, the MIR 16th Annual Spring Gala & Auction. We had a great time in the beautiful Mitten Building!

After a sumptuous feast served by Roberto Argentina of Farm Artisan Foods, auctioneer Sam Neely led the live auction. Participants responded enthusiastically to the wonderful treasures presented to them, helping MIR raise funds to preserve our grounds—the living, vital setting of our school; and to purchase materials to enhance the arts component of our Montessori programs.

Thank you to all the families and other supporters who generously donated time, goods, and services to make this a fabulous Gala.

MIR would especially like to thank the Spring Gala team and volunteers for making this event possible: Jill McDermott, Chair; Lisa Oliver; Jen Avegno; Michel

Bellefeuille; Camilla Bodnar; Molly Butler; Kathleen Liess; Shelley McCarthy; Andrea Ray; Coby Smith, Gabrielle Symmes; and Shawnda Zook.

Most of all, thank you to everyone who generously participated in the auction!

Parent-Infant Class to Start in April

MIR will host a 4-week Parent-Infant Class for children from six weeks to 17 months and their parents. The class will be taught by MIR Toddler teacher Liana McCall and will focus on assisting the child's development through small-group interaction. Parents will learn how to observe, support, and encourage the child's natural development.

Special materials and furniture will aid the infant with movement, hand/eye coordination, and the development of the senses. The teacher acts as the link between the prepared environment and the children, helping to provide experiences within the environment. These experiences are designed to require enough effort from the child for him to be interested and to feel successful.

The class concludes with a "parent only" discussion group, which will deepen your appreciation and understanding of your child's stages of development. The discussion also covers nutrition, the child's environment, and discipline.

The class is open to the public. It will be held at MIR on Wednesdays, 4–5:15 PM, April 3, 10, 17, and 24. The discussion group will meet on Friday, April 26, 4–5 PM. The cost is \$50. Families must RSVP in the office or at 909-793-6989.

Sign Up for Session 2 of Soccer Camp

The second set of soccer camps will start Wednesday, March 20. Primary soccer will be offered in addition to Elementary.

Elementary soccer camp will meet 3:35-4:30 PM for four weeks and is open to ages 6-10 years. Primary soccer camp is open to children ages 4.5 to 6 years (must have turned 4.5 by January 1, 2013). Camp will meet 3:05-3:35 PM and runs for four weeks.

Sign up for both camps in the office before Spring Break.

Whether you need a full-day schedule or a few hours in the morning, we have a program for you.

- Ages 18 months to 12 years
- Special summer activities
- Plenty of fun!

Programs for ages 18 months to 6 years are for registered MIR students. The Elementary program is open to all.

A big thank you to our sponsors

Top of the Tower Sponsors



Foundation Sponsors



GETTING YOUR MONEY'S WORTH (*cont.*)

(Continued from page 3)

he will when writing with a pencil. When his two fingers trace the shape of each of the sandpaper letters, he is directly preparing his hand to make that same shape later with a pencil or piece of chalk.

But what about the child's mind? What's the use of preparing her to express herself in writing if she doesn't have thoughts and ideas to express, and the sounds and words with which to express them? That is where other sensorial and language activities come in. Every sensorial activity has language that is attached to it, whether the names of leaf shapes, geometric shapes, colors, continents and countries, or the adjectives that qualify sensorial experience. The classroom is filled with card material to enrich the vocabulary of a child, from the names of vegetables and animals and planets to the parts of the flower. She will also need to learn to distinguish the phonetic sounds of the English language by playing sound games with phonetic objects with the teacher ("Can you show me the object that starts with the sound 's-s-s-s'? Yes, sock does start with the sound s-s-s-s."), and to associate each of those sounds with its cursive symbol with the sandpaper letters.

These two pathways of preparation come together when the child forms words with the cutout letters of the moveable alphabet. Having acquired all of the smaller component skills in earlier work, in essence the child discovers writing for himself. Soon thereafter he will begin spontaneously reading back what he has just composed, and add a second great discovery to the first.

But these acquisitions, important as they are, are not an end. Beginning skills in phonetic reading and writing are actually a launching point from which the five year old (in the third year in Primary) expands into four areas:

- **Writing mechanics:** progressing in stages from writing on a blank chalkboard to writing on lined paper.
- **Creative writing** with the small moveable alphabet: from single words to phrases to whole sentences to stories and the first written reports.

- **Reading mechanics:** from phonetic reading to adding the phonograms (letter combinations such as "sh" and "ay") and non-phonetic sight words (such as "the" and "who" and "beautiful") and studying word families, compound words, prefixes, suffixes, synonyms, anonyms and homonyms.
- **Reading comprehension:** an understanding of the functions of the parts of speech through fun and experiential activities with the noun, article, adjective, conjunction, preposition, verb and adverb, enriches writing and reading leading to deeper levels of reading comprehension.

When a child is removed from the critical third year of the Primary program, all the momentum building to these skills effectively stops. Often, the skills required of a kindergarten in standard schooling at this age are much less

demanding than what they learn in this 3rd year. In that case, momentum not only stops, but *reverses*, leaving the child to begin again in 1st grade. Beyond how frustrating your child may find this, you've just put a stop to, and potentially reversed, the return on your investment in their childhood education.

This situation is not limited to language skills. Children in the first two years are developing foundational skills in mathematics, geometry, geography

or music that only in the third year come to fruition. Perhaps more importantly, children make great strides in their personality development over the three years of Primary. The skills of making good decisions, concentration, self-management, grace and courtesy, and care of one self and others, culminate in an irreplaceable experience of leadership and self-esteem that only comes together in the third year.

The same case can be made, both in terms of academic and personality development, for completing the three years of lower or upper elementary, just as convincingly.

In a very real sense, by opting to keep your child in Montessori to complete a three-year cycle, you are simply protecting a good investment, and getting your money's worth.



WHAT MAKES MONTESSORI *MONTESSORI*?*(Continued from page 1)*

Montessori theory has a deep and profound respect for the human being on its journey from infancy to adulthood. Rather than seeing children as formless objects to be “shaped” like clay by adults, Montessori sees children as full human beings to be nurtured to their full potential. This respect guides everything we do—how we speak to the children, how we arrange things on the shelf, how we present a lesson, how we treat the environment. Our main duty is to create a place where the child is able to grow and develop the physical, intellectual, social, and emotional self. This place has every “thing” they need but most importantly it is a place where they are honored and valued and allowed to become a full human being. What makes Montessori *Montessori* is that it is more than a way of approaching education, it is a way of approaching life.

Andre Roberfroid, the President of the Board of the Association Montessori Internationale, is responsible for looking at Montessori from a global perspective. He gets to see Montessori being practiced in places as diverse as private and public schools in Europe, Australia, Thailand, to unexpected places, such as a refugee camp in Africa where the guides must build all the materials themselves. When asked to describe Montessori in one minute—an “elevator speech”—he had this to say:

“Montessori is a wonderful way to educate children; it makes them happy to learn. That’s what Montessori’s about. Why is that so?

Because it respects three fundamental principles:

“One is that it recognizes that children love to exercise freedom and it offers them that opportunity to learn in an environment that is free.

“It also recognizes that you cannot be free if you are the only one to be free. So it also organizes the class so that mutual respect is what is demanded from every child as a condition to be free.

“And last it also tells the children that unless all of them have the same chances, none of them do, so it also offering them an opportunity to practice solidarity.

Freedom, mutual respect, solidarity—that is Montessori.”

**REPORT FROM THE BOARD (cont.)***(Continued from page 3)*

one constant: success follows when your child is ready to learn, and not a minute before that time. Trust the child – their natural curiosity will lead them to learning.

The other big elephant in the room at any Montessori school is the issue of no testing. But I ask you this: if you knew you could not fail, what would you do? There are no tests in Montessori; therefore, MIR children get to explore the answer to this question every day. Children at MIR are never taught to a test and are never asked to regurgitate information or required to work in an inorganic environment. My children are never compared to another child or to a capricious standard. Instead, they are measured against their own growth and are celebrated for who they are and what they have mastered.

If this sounds too warm and fuzzy for you, rest assured that Montessori principles are grounded in sound educational practices. Magnet schools, charter schools, private schools, all of the “new” ideas in traditional education are incorporating the ideas of manipulatives, multi-sensorial learning, collaborative environments, and alternative assessments; all practices that Montessori has been perfecting for more than 100 years. Current brain research even supports the principles of the Montessori method as the natural way to learn. But I do not need a study to tell me what I do already know from experience because my children prove it to me each and every day.

Academics aside, my life truly changed for the better the day I first came to MIR for the toddler observation. It was the very thing I was looking for to encourage my child’s curiosity, love of learning, and hunger for life. It has also given me, as an adult, a whole new outlook on the history and path of humankind. What is more, it is a rewarding experience for me personally as I continually get to meet other parents who place their child’s happiness as a top priority in life.

Finally, my sharing of my own experience with you would be woefully incomplete without stressing the importance of my children’s teachers. MIR’s teachers view my children, and every child in the classroom, as a miraculous, intelligent person worthy of respect. They are not just a name or a number. Instead of demanding silence and stillness, the teachers offer constructive activities that keep the children’s minds and bodies engaged. My children will be here for the next school year. And their experience, and my own, will be richer if your children are too. I hope to see each of you around campus next year!

PARENT ED NIGHT
(cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

Feed Your Family at Parent/Child Night

Will you need dinner on Thursday? Enjoy a delicious meal served by MIR's Upper Elementary students. You will also be contributing to a great cause—this is a kick off fundraiser for the 2014 6th year trip. For \$5 you get a plate of spaghetti (plain, marinara, or meat sauce), salad (ranch or Italian dressing), and water or lemonade. Dinner will be served 5-7 PM in Margaretann's classroom on the North Campus. Thank you for your support!

Schedule Your Parent-Teacher Conference(s)
Parent-Teacher conferences offer important time with your child's teacher.

Conferences will be held Thursday and Friday, March 28 and 29 and allow you to learn about your child's progress and the work that they do each day. You will receive a progress report for your child and be able to discuss each academic and social/emotional area one-on-one with your child's teachers. **Sign up in the office for a time slot. If you are unavailable at these times, please arrange an alternate time with your child's teacher.**

Early Registration Begins in March

During March, current MIR families have the opportunity to enroll current students and their siblings for the 2013-2014 school year. **You will receive your registration packets in the mail early this week.** Please read your enrollment packet carefully as there are changes to the tuition rates for next year.

Registering early allows you to pay a discounted registration fee of \$350 per child. After March 29, the registration fee is \$500 per child, no exceptions. Early registration also ensures you secure a space for your child for the following school year. While you can continue to register after March 29, our waiting lists are long and we start enrolling new students beginning April 15.

Thank you for being part of the Montessori in Redlands community and allowing us the privilege to partner with you in educating your children!

March 2013

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
				1 Early registration for 2013-2014 begins
				2 MIR Spring Gala
4 Childcare RSVP deadline for Spring Break Board Open Forum, 6:30 PM	5 Lango classes 	6	7 School closes at 5 PM Spaghetti Dinner, 5-7 PM Parent/Child Night, 5-7 PM Choir	8
11	12	13	14	15
Spring Break. No school; childcare by reservation.				
18 Staff in-service day. No school; no childcare.	19 Lango classes Childcare reservation deadline for Parent-Teacher Conferences 	20  Soccer clinics	21 Lango classes  Choir	22 Bluebird Assembly, 9:15 AM
25	26 Lango classes Nikki's class & Maria's class trip to Orange Empire Railway 	27 Lower El class trips to Inland Empire Gymnastics (times vary by class)  Soccer clinics	28 Parent/Teacher conferences. No school; childcare by reservation.	29 Last day for early registration
1	2 Lango classes PTM meeting, 6 PM 	3  Soccer clinics	4 Lango classes  Spring Picture Day  Choir	5 Bluebird family skate night at CalSkate, 5-7 PM 