



# BLUEBIRD BULLETIN

APRIL 2014 VOLUME 38, ISSUE 8

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## HELPING HANDS DAY OF SERVICE CONTINUE THE WORK ON HERITAGE PARK

Join MIR and The Grove School at the annual Redlands "Helping Hands Community Day of Service," which will be held Saturday, April 26, 8 AM-1 PM.

This year's projects will include continuing the work we did at Heritage Park last year, among the three projects set for the day. These improvements will further enhance the learning environment for both schools.

Everyone in your family can participate, even young children. Participation requires a waiver. Sign up and complete your waiver at [redlandsservice.org](http://redlandsservice.org). Lunch will be provided by Noon Kiwanis.



## SEEING THE CHILD WHO IS NOT YET THERE

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

I imagine parents might wonder what goes on at school during those teacher in-service days. Although an inconvenience for our families, the staff looks forward to having this time to do some much needed work for your children. Individual teachers and assistants spend time getting the classrooms ready, planning lessons, arranging field trips, discussing progress of students, and checking in with each other as teams. As a whole staff, we often have to go over

some "nuts and bolts" types of things and at each in-service day, we review something that needs attention on an annual basis, like disaster planning, licensing regulations, human resources policies, and our action plans from our WASC and AMI accreditations.

On each of these days, I make sure that

we go back to the source of our inspiration—Maria Montessori herself. Reading her words often re-focuses us for the next part of the year, as she often reminds us why we are here. At our last in-service day on March 24, I chose two of her quotes to

reflect upon with the staff. I thought about how these quotes speak to me as a parent and decided I would share them with you. They both come from her book *The Absorbent Mind*.

"...while (traditionally)

*the teacher sees the immediate behavior of her pupils, knowing that she has to look after them and what she has to teach, the Montessori teacher is constantly looking for a child who is not yet there.*" (p. 252)

As a parent there are times when envi-

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## PTM NEWS AND NOTES

By THE PTM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

### NOMINATE OFFICERS FOR THE PTM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Do you know someone who would be a great asset to the PTM Executive Committee? Nominations for President and Treasurer for the 2014-15 school year will be accepted April 21 through May 2. Nomination information will be sent out later this month. Current PTM Room Reps are highly encouraged to continue their PTM journey as a member of the Executive Committee. If you have any questions about the nomination process, or the open positions, please talk with a member of the PTM Executive Committee to learn more.

### EVENTS

#### Skate with MIR on April 11

Please join us for another night of skating and fun on Friday, April 11 at CalSkate in Grand Terrace from 5-7 PM. Tickets are available in the office until 4 PM Friday for \$6 each, or at the door for \$8. All prices include skate rental. You can “upgrade” to inline skates for a nominal fee at the door or bring your own skates.

Tickets are not required for anyone not skating. This event is open to all MIR, Farm, and Grove students as well as friends and family they would like to bring as their guests.

#### Summer Skate Nights

NEW this year! We will have two additional opportunities for children to escape the summer heat and skate with their friends. Mark your calendars for Friday, June 27 and Friday, August 22. The August edition will be a special “Back to School” Skate Night. What better way for the children to keep cool, get exercise, and have FUN with friends! Stay tuned for more information.

#### Save the Date for the Annual Spring Carnival

The Spring Carnival will be held Saturday, May 3, 11 AM –3 PM. It will be a fun-filled day including a bounce house, inflatable obstacle course, classroom game booths, prizes, and an opportunity drawing for people who bring us their Box Tops. Admission is \$10 per family and covers all games and activities.

*Parent volunteers are needed.* Please sign up in your child’s classroom to work for just a half hour during the carnival. This is a fun way to participate in making the Spring Carnival a great day for everyone.

### SEEING THE CHILD... (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

sioning the person that my child is going to be is easier said than done. Although it is easy for me to imagine my son headed off to college or playing soccer in high school, there are days I wonder if he’ll ever learn to put his shin guards in the same place after practice so that it is not a heightened drama looking for them three times a week. There are times that I assume that he “knows better” and I just cannot figure out why he doesn’t just do things that I expect. I have to remember that he is learning and he is growing and he is not fully formed. I often forget that he is going through a process and although the person in front of me may be a little frustrating, he is on a journey and I can’t fault him for being 12 years old. Dr. Montessori’s quote reminds me to take a moment, breathe and think, before I let out a “Why can’t you just...”

More importantly, it is my job to inspire him on his path. If I want him to be a happy, fully-formed human person, then I need to do as Maria Montessori suggests, and constantly look for the child who is not yet there, and realize that he is relying on me, and the environment I create to get him there. What am I doing to give him the tools he will need? Am I giving him experiences with other cultures, nature, literature, the arts, academic disciplines, and practical life skills? Am I modeling the behaviors I hope him to have as an adult? Am I kind, generous, respectful, organized, happy, and tenacious?

*“The teacher, when she begins work in our schools, must have a kind of faith that the child will reveal himself through work. She must free herself from pre-conceived ideas concerning the level at which children may be.” (p. 252)*

(Continued on page 6)



MIR Bluebird Nilay Mehta celebrates in front of the Kīlauea Lighthouse, located on Kīlauea Point on the island of Kaua’i, Hawai’i. Nilay visited Hawai’i on a recent family vacation and was sure to take his MIR shirt with him. Send your Bluebird photos to [kensok@montessoriinredlands.org](mailto:kensok@montessoriinredlands.org) for publication in the Bluebird Bulletin.

## Report from the Board

by DEAN SILLIMAN, SECRETARY

### BOOK REVIEW: MONTESSORI MADNESS!

Why do you send your child to a Montessori school? Why does anyone?

These questions may arise early when choosing a toddler program or later if the child is already in the traditional school system. For some current Montessori parents the questions are raised in the form of wondering whether Montessori is the right place for their children. But how much information about the Montessori system do parents have when they face those questions?

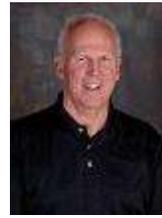
If you are like most MIR parents, you have attended class observations, Parent Education nights, and perhaps a *Journey & Discovery* or two, all of which are fine events. We learn a lot about Montessori by seeing the setting and activities our children experience every school day. But there is only so far that can go. You may know your way around a bead chain or a grammar box and you may know the basics of a Montessori education. But if really pressed for detail, how well could you explain the Montessori system, including its underlying methods, goals, and benefits? Could you explain why many of the unusual components of Montessori are the way they are, or why Montessori children differ from those in traditional school? If you have doubts about Montessori, do you know what is behind the parts of the Montessori system that concern you?

If not, I know a book you should read. In fact, all Montessori parents should read it.

*Montessori Madness!: A Parent to Parent Argument for Montessori Education* was written by a Montessori parent, Trevor Eissler, to explore the thesis that the education and life preparation offered by Montessori is far better than that offered by traditional schooling.

The Montessori system, he notes, was developed to be in a more natural home-like environment and to be child-centric. Knowledge is not poured like water from teacher to student but instead is discovered as a product of the child's own interest in topics and materials

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## Curriculum Matters

By PETER DAVIDSON,  
ASSISTANT HEAD OF SCHOOL

### WHAT IS A LESSON?

"The role of education is to interest the child profoundly in an external activity to which he will give all of his potential."—Maria Montessori

Perhaps we need to come up with a better word, for what we mean by a "lesson" in Montessori is quite different from what most people think. A lesson, in a Montessori classroom, is generally a demonstration of a way to use a material that is new to the child. Each material incorporates a concept or skill in a form that involves more than just the visual or auditory sense, and that invites activity, exploration, and discovery.

In other words, it is not in the "lesson" that the learning happens, but in the activity, exploration, and discovery that follows it.

For instance, in the Primary classroom, there is a beginning mathematics material meant for the younger children called "the spindle boxes." It consists of two wooden boxes with compartments, and a box of wooden sticks or "spindles." Above each compartment a number is printed, starting with 0 and continuing through 9.

The learning moment contained within the spindle boxes is that of 0 as a placeholder, and the value of the numbers 1-9, each as a collection of objects. When his teacher has observed that a child is developmentally and academically ready for these concepts, she will invite him to a "lesson" which really means a demonstration of a way to use the material for learning.

She will point to 0, and let the child know that 0 means nothing, and so she will put nothing in that compartment. Then she places one spindle into the "1" slot, counts "one, two" spindles into the 2 slot, etc., all the way through 9. Then she shows the child that the basket of spindles is now empty. (There are exactly the right number of spindles in the basket if one counts correctly).

By now the child can hardly wait to have his turn. Once they have removed all of the spindles from the boxes together, the teacher will move back and let the child take over. This is where the learning begins!

What do you think happens the first time the child tries

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# MIR SPRING GALA

## The 17th Annual Spring Gala and Auction Totally Rocks!



We had a great turnout and an AWESOME night at the MIR 17th Annual Spring Gala & Auction. Everyone who attended agreed that this was one of the most fun ever.

People really got into the 80s spirit, with costumes ranging from Care Bears and Devo to Marty McFly and Michael Jackson to fabulous “vintage” prom looks. The DJ entertained with 80s tunes and videos, and the dance floor was busy until midnight. There was even an appearance by 80s SoCal celebrity DJ/VJ Richard Blade, who created a video just for MIR to introduce the evening’s financial aid “cyberdash.”

Auctioneer Sam Neely led the live auction, helping MIR to raise \$31,750 through sales of the beautiful classroom items. A new mobile bidding system helped raise silent auction totals to \$9,039, \$2,000 more than previous years. Total proceeds for the evening, including the live auction, silent auction, and sponsorships, came to \$72,837.

Proceeds from the event will be used to bring MIR’s second phase of the “Green School Initiative” to reality—partly by the installation of solar panels. This will significantly reduce our energy usage to allow us to invest more of our funds directly into student education. Funds are also used to provide financial assistance to MIR families

MIR would like to thank the Spring Gala team and volunteers for making this event possible:

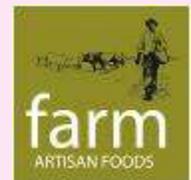
- |                              |                    |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| * Jill McDermott, Chair      | * Lisa Oliver      |
| * Victoria and Damian Hobson | * Andrea Ray       |
| * Lisa Kensok                | * Rena Rice        |
| * Kathleen Liess             | * Coby Smith       |
| * Shelley McCarthy           | * Gabrielle Symmes |
| * Corey Oliver               | * Shawnda Zook     |

Thanks also goes to all the families and other supporters who generously donated time, goods, and services to make this a fabulous Gala. Most of all, thank you to everyone who gave us such marvelous results!

### Our sponsors are AWESOME!

Thank you to our sponsors for supporting a great evening.

#### ‘Like, Awesome!’ Sponsors



ADVERTISING DESIGN

#### ‘Totally Rad’ Sponsor



#### ‘Tubular’ Sponsors

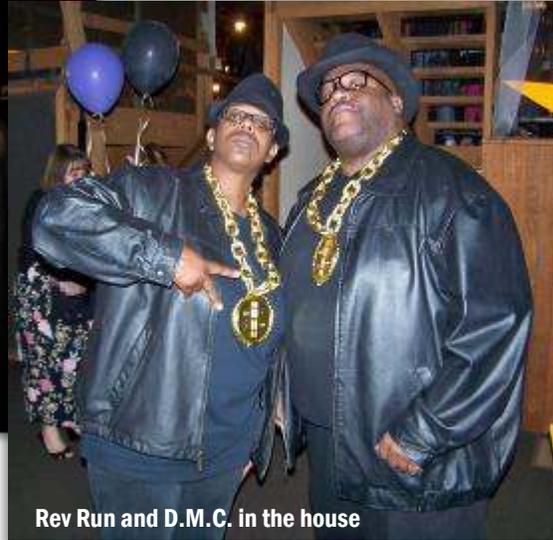


# MIR SPRING GALA TAKES ON THE 80S

Prom night



Devo reunites



Rev Run and D.M.C. in the house

Thriller Flashmob!



The entertainment for the evening was provided by MIR staff and parents, who surprised and delighted the audience with a flashmob dance to Michael Jackson's Thriller.

The Care Bears never stop caring.



We wanna rock!



Your will...is not your own...



Visit [montessori-inredlands.org/gala](http://montessori-inredlands.org/gala) for more photos!

## SEEING THE CHILD... (cont.)

(Continued from page 2)

Our second quote from Montessori is very much connected to the first. As parents, much as we try not to, we are often comparing our children to their friends, their siblings, or their teammates. We also came to this parenting thing with our own preconceived notions—pre-dominantly from our own

childhood. Maria Montessori invites us to look at the child through a different lens. Having faith that the child will get there—that no matter how much we think we can control, it is through their own efforts that our children will learn and grow and become who they are going to be. He may not become a college athlete (like his father expects) or a writer (like his

mother expects) but he is going to be something, and his work will get him there. That is what is guaranteed. My expectations as a parent need to be balanced between what he needs to be focused on right now, and the faith that he is building himself for tomorrow.

During the in-service, the staff brainstormed what it looks like in the classroom when we are honoring the

spirit of these quotes well. We also talked about what it looks like when we are not. The staff were earnest in their reflections and engaged in their conversation in how to do this better. I am confident they walked into school the next day with these ideas fresh in their minds, ready to honor the children before them and support them on this part of their journey.

## REPORT FROM THE BOARD (cont.)

(Continued from page 3)

within a well-prepared environment. Children, who are born hungry to learn, experience self-fulfillment when they naturally concentrate on topics and materials that have caught their interest, leading to the child's association of learning with positive feelings. Children learn a strong sense of self and community because they spend their Montessori days free to interact with other children on a wide range of personal and academic issues, not just at "approved times" like recess. Constant modeling of grace and good behavior by the teachers and the broader age range of Montessori classrooms add to this sense of community.

Eissler's book then delves into detailed discussions of themes important to the Montessori system such as Sensitive Periods, the Absorbent Mind, the Prepared Environment, and others. It is these chapters that provide in-depth yet accessible discussion that highlight how the Montessori system works and why it is so special. In this brief review I can merely offer examples that will lead to "Ah-Ha!" moments for any Montessori parent: The Sensitive Periods chapter explains why one's child refuses to take an interest in spelling for months then suddenly attempts to spell—incorrectly but relentlessly—just about everything. The Absorbent Mind chapter explains why children go through the dreaded but wonderful "Why? Why? Why?" phase. The Prepared Environment chapter explains why the Montessori classroom has such an odd but wonderful collection of materials and why the three-year age grouping in classrooms is important. The Fear of

Error and Controlling Error chapters explain why Montessori children only line-out mistakes in their work instead of erasing. (Hint: Error is embraced as part of the process, not something negative or to be hidden.)

An important portion of the book addresses the "Is my kid okay at Montessori?" question often asked by Montessori parents. Eissler writes that some potential Montessori parents ask how they will know how their child is scoring or ranking in a Montessori class. His provocative response: "You don't and you won't" ... because Montessori asks different questions of students than their scores. He adds that the appropriate questions, instead, are whether the child is happy, learning, independent, able to concentrate, and has a nurtured curiosity. It is those questions, he states, that cannot be answered by testing. He also adds that it is the parent who should make assessments of the child anyway because they are closest to the child, though he states that Montessori teachers can be of assistance in this regard because of their skills in observing your child during his or her Montessori days.

With its infectious enthusiasm for the system, *Montessori Madness!* is the literary equivalent of standing in a Montessori classroom while looking around, thinking "I can't believe my children get to spend their school days here, doing this." The book will give you a new appreciation for what your children do every school day. With a lot more to offer than can be squeezed into this brief review, the book also will fill those holes in your knowledge about Montessori or help answer concerns you may have about the system.

## WHAT IS A LESSON? (cont.)

(Continued from page 3)

it? By the time he gets to 9 he will either run out of spindles or have some left over. He'll try again and again and again. He'll probably come out with an empty basket a minority of times, but as he chooses it and repeats it and practices it over the ensuing days and weeks (along with all of the other choices he is making in sensorial, practical life, language, expression, music and geography) he will get better and better until he has mastered it. He has learned the concept the spindle boxes offer, and he's ready for a "lesson" on the cards and counters, which are a bit harder and more abstract and communicate the difference between odd and even numbers.

This is truly child-centered learning, as the learning is taking place through the child's own exploration, activity, repetition and gradual mastery. In this learning process the teacher is merely the link to activity, as she simply helps to get the learning started. The learning itself will happen without the participation of the teacher, as she moves away to engage other children in other activities, merely observing from time to time how the child is doing in his quest of mastery.

Each and every material in a Primary or Toddler classroom isolates a skill or concept and offers the child the opportunity of learning and mastery through his own activity and is presented in this way.

A good example of a learning material in an Elementary class would be the Pythagorean plates. Most of us memorized the Pythagorean Theorem in middle or high school geometry class as "the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides." Or perhaps all we remember is the formula  $A^2 + B^2 = C^2$ . Whether or not we truly understood what we had memorized is another thing all together, of course. In a Montessori Elementary class a student has the opportunity to discover and prove this theorem to herself through her own activity, rather than merely memorizing it. And again, the teacher's role is simply to introduce it, to get the work of the student start-

ed, leaving the concept for the child to prove and discover herself, thereby understanding it in a way that will stay with her the rest of her life.

There are other "lessons" in an Elementary class, often taking the form of an impressionistic chart or inspirational story. An example of this would be the "Story of Writing," also called "Communication in Signs." This story tells of the development of the written alphabet and the amazing ability of human beings to symbolize and record their thoughts. As such, it refers to the earliest forms of writing including hieroglyphs and cuneiform as well as various alphabets (including ours) and the invention of the printing press.

As you can imagine, such a story captures the imagination of every student and leads to a wide array of further exploration. Some students may want to research the Babylonians or Egyptians, write their name in hieroglyphics or Norse runes, find out more about Gutenberg and the way

the first printing press worked, or even create their own alphabets and languages! The point is that the teacher's role is once again to be a link and an inspiration, a jumping-off point, that leaves the work of exploration, discovery, and learning to the children.

Necessarily then, the amount of time a child spends in a "lesson" is vastly smaller than the amount of

time he spends learning

through his own activity. This often trips us up as adults who grew up in a traditional teacher-centered classroom. We tend to equate learning only with "lessons" don't we? We are disappointed if our child tells us she didn't have a "lesson" today, or only had one or two "lessons" this week. Seeing things through the lens of our own educations, we wrongly assume that our child wasn't learning anything today, or only learned one or two things all week, when nothing could be farther from the truth. Indeed that means that she is spending the large majority of her time engaged in exploration, activity, and discovery. Learning, in other words! And the teacher will be there, with a new demonstration, inspiration, "lesson," whenever she is ready to start on the active process of learning a new skill or concept.



A student working with the spindle boxes.

PARENT MONTH (cont.)

SIGN UP FOR THE MIR SUMMER PROGRAM

SPRING PICTURE DAY IS THURSDAY, APRIL 3

Children change a lot in 6 months! Spring Picture Day is your opportunity to get a new formal portrait of your child. Children are photographed individually.

Look for an order envelope in your parent folder. The prices on the envelope are discounted 15% and are good through Picture Day (in other words, if you pre-order your photos).

After Picture Day, photos will be posted to a secure website and you will be given a code to access and order them. Order(s) will be mailed to your home.

Ordering photos benefits your child's education as well—MIR receives 12% of all proceeds.

If you have questions about your photographs or ordering, contact the photographer, Sparrow Studios, directly at 909-882-3922.

Great Y Circus to Hold Benefit Auction

If you're a fan of the Great Y Circus, consider supporting their auction on Friday, April 11, 6-10 PM at the Mitten Building. Tickets are \$40 each, and you can buy them at the YMCA gym. Funds raised provide costumes for performances and support scholarships to participate in Circus. This year's auction theme is "A Sweet Night in Paradise"—think Willy Wonka.

Continue your child's enrichment while providing plenty of summer fun! The MIR Summer Program offers flexible programs, lots of summer fun, and a consistent environment for your child. The program runs in two-week sessions and offers half-, full-, and all-day programs for all ages.

Registration for current MIR families is open now and continues until classes are full. **The deposit for families who register by April 11 is \$100.** All families who register after April 11 will be required to pay the full amount of the first session attending at the time of registration. To enroll, complete all registration forms and bring them to the office along with your required deposit. Enrollment is first-come, first-served.

Visit [montessoriinredlands.org/summer](http://montessoriinredlands.org/summer) for more information and all forms.

April 2014

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
31 Early registration ends	1 Lango classes	2 Sara's class—Raymond Alf Museum	3 Lango classes Margaretann and Kristen's class—SBVC Planetarium Spring Picture Day Women's yoga, 6:15 PM Choir	4 Coffee, Tea, and M.E., 8:45 AM 5 The Grove School Monopoly Tournament, 9 AM-5 PM
7	8 Lango classes Teesie's class—Living Desert	9	10 Lango classes Women's yoga, 6:15 PM Choir	11 Summer school early registration ends Maria & Sara's classes—Lewis Family Playhouse PTM Family Skate Night, 5-7 PM
14	15 Payments due Lango classes	16 PTM meeting, 6 PM	17 Lango classes Women's yoga, 6:15 PM Choir	18 Nikki's class—Aquarium of the Pacific
21 PTM board nominations begin	22 Lango classes	23 Kara/Marie's class—Precision Gymnastics	24 Lango classes Women's yoga, 6:15 PM Choir	25 Bluebird Assembly, 9:15 AM Jean and MH's class—Bridges Auditorium
28	29 Lango classes	30 Teesie's class—Getty Villa	1 Lango classes Women's yoga, 6:15 PM Choir	2 PTM board nominations end 3 Spring Carnival, 11 AM-3 PM