The following pages illustrate just some of the many ways in which the Montessori Center of Minnesota (MCM) works every day to put equity into action on behalf of the child.

- We recruit and train qualified, committed adults from culturally and economically diverse backgrounds to become Montessori teachers and support all children’s optimal development.

- We engage grassroots organizations in historically underserved Twin Cities communities to build and manage their own Montessori schools. These neighborhood schools, in turn, implement the principles of social justice each day in a micro-society of 3- to 6-year-olds.

- We partner with St. Catherine University to support the well-being of families with an eye toward the social determinants of healthy child development.

As MCM, located in East St. Paul, prepares to celebrate 45 years of Association Montessori Internationale training, we are proud to present this annual report. Its stories look back on the past year’s accomplishments toward our mission of giving all children access to high-quality, proven Montessori education.

In deep gratitude to those whose ongoing support makes our work possible,

Molly O’Shaughnessy
President and Director of Primary Training

Nancy Lee
Board Chair
Equity for children is rooted in making sure all the social determinants of healthy development can be put in place and sustained. This is our focus in every activity of the Montessori Center of Minnesota, beginning with our teacher training courses and extending all the way to our Montessori Partners Serving All Children (MPSAC) communities.

Starting with early education, Montessori is a viable, proven, and culturally responsive approach that should be accessible to all children. However, many families aren’t aware of, nor do they have access to, the social and cognitive benefits of Montessori. Therefore, MCM’s outreach initiative expands access to Montessori education for parents and very young children in an effort to introduce educational equity outside of our early childhood programs. For these reasons and many more, our programs are important contributors to mitigating educational, social, and other disparities, beginning right here in our own East St. Paul neighborhood.

True equity can exist only when there is a just distribution of the resources that affect the social determinants of health. Maria Montessori understood that high-quality education for all children is the foundation of an equitable society. She also knew that, given a nurturing environment, a child can absorb feelings of belonging and self-worth from the moment of birth — and she recognized the monumental responsibility that comes with that knowledge. That responsibility is simply to step out of the way and let the child lead.

**MPSAC Schools: Delivering on the Promise of a Quality Education**

Children in MPSAC schools demonstrated statistically significant growth over the 2017-2018 school year on two standardized tests of important school readiness skills, the Minnesota Executive Function Scale (MEFS) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Toolbox Picture Vocabulary Test. As shown, the numbers of scores in the “below average” and “well below average” ranges (based on a national scale) shrank from fall to spring, while “above average” and “well above average” scores increased.
Susana (pictured left) was working in the traditional preschool at Centro Tyrone Guzman in Minneapolis when the organization joined MPSAC and transformed its school to Siembra Montessori. Susana took the MCM Assistants Course and continued to work at Siembra, impressed with the respect, engagement, and independence she was seeing, as well as the change in her own child enrolled there.

Similarly, Maya (pictured right) had a traditional early-childhood background, having taught kindergarten and first grade. For her own children and others, though, she wanted more. First, she was convinced that dual-language immersion is one key to closing the achievement gap, presenting “a fantastic opportunity for children to learn from each other” that “also carries a social justice aspect.” And after enrolling her young son in Montessori, she realized what else she’d been looking for: a focus on the needs of the child.

Maya became determined to start a dual-language immersion Montessori school, and MCM was her first stop on the journey. Because of the alignment between her passion and MCM’s mission, she says, “I took the training with the intention of starting an MPSAC partner school.”

Meanwhile, a co-worker of Susana’s at Siembra, who had taken the full Primary course at MCM through a Greater Twin Cities United Way Women United scholarship, encouraged Susana to apply. Susana, too, was awarded a Women United scholarship and enrolled in Primary training. There, she began to be moved even more deeply by the mission of bringing Montessori to all children.

So it was natural that when Maya asked her Director of Training, Molly O’Shaughnessy, “Do you know anyone who would be interested in starting a school?” Molly introduced her to Susana. From her experience at Siembra, Susana knew that MPSAC partner schools benefit from teacher mentorship, social work support, early childhood screenings, and many other resources for both the school and the families. She also agreed with Maya that the chance to learn in Spanish and transfer knowledge into English is a game changer for children who speak Spanish at home. Adding Montessori to the mix, the two women explained, engages children in a way that isn’t achieved in traditional schools and has the power to shift reading, writing, and math outcomes, especially for English language learners.

In September 2018, Maya and Susana opened Lirio Montessori in South Minneapolis, putting access into action in another neighborhood.

Partnering for Access:
Birth of a Montessori School

Inspired by our mission, two women came from separate lives to the Montessori Center of Minnesota. Though they planned on taking different paths with their diplomas, three years later, they are partners with each other and with MCM to start a brand-new Montessori school.
“There is really a lot more to my work than most people might suspect. I help prepare the environment, getting it ready for the children. I also support the children. Sometimes, I help in moments when they need some extra support or when they don’t know what to do. I sit with them and share a conversation or sing a song. I help build trust. I love that I get to assist the teacher in building community. Each day is new and different, and being here, quietly supporting the children and the room brings me much happiness.”

— Angela Kaufman, Cornerstone Montessori School

From replenishing supplies to modeling grace and courtesy, an assistant works in the background to keep a Montessori classroom running smoothly. They maintain an overview of the children, noting their work and any needs they perceive, while the teacher may be offering lessons to individual children or small groups.

Assistants with Montessori training are especially valuable due to their understanding of the Montessori philosophy and how to implement it. Unfortunately, they are also in short supply. Viewed through an equity lens, training more Montessori assistants ensures that more children get access to adults specifically trained to meet their needs. A trained assistant also gives the school one more opportunity to staff the classroom with an adult who reflects the demographics of the children.

That’s why the Montessori Center of Minnesota stepped up its already robust assistant training program in fiscal 2018. First, we added two new formats for the Primary (ages 3-6) Assistants’ Course, a weekend course in St. Paul and a satellite course in Duluth. These innovations allowed working professionals to earn an Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) certificate. Of the 58 assistants, administrators, and parents who participated in these courses, 9 were women who received full scholarships that made the training financially possible for them.

In addition, we expanded our assistants’ offerings to the Elementary (ages 6-12) level. Alison Awes, Director of Elementary Training, presented a two-week AMI Elementary Assistants’ Course to 21 assistants and administrators.

Many participants in these courses were already working in Montessori schools and therefore able to put theory into practice quickly. Participants reported not only improved practice following training, but also increased or stabilized wages. Several were promoted within their programs; and some participating parents said they had changed their homes and parenting practices as a result of the course.

**Thinking Globally, Acting Locally**

More than 30 students from Russia to the Dominican Republic, Florida to Maine, gathered in St. Paul this summer to continue their work as part of MCM’s fifth Elementary Course. Alison Awes serves as Director of Elementary Training.

The three-summer course began in 2016. The students studied Dr. Maria Montessori’s work, specifically her writings on the development of the child ages 6 to 12, and the subject areas of art, biology, botany, geography, geometry, history, language, math, music, and zoology. The men and women in the course also spent four weeks observing in established Montessori Elementary environments and four weeks student teaching in AMI schools around the world.

**Supporting Equity Through Human Development**

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A primary goal of Serving the Whole Child (SWC), a partnership between MPSAC and St. Catherine University, is to engage parents and increase their agency. This year, the SWC advisory board decided to use the World Café model of guided conversations (theworldcafe.com) to find out what services and activities would best meet the needs of each school community.

A parent committee with representatives from each school site was trained on the model and planned World Café events at each school site, with conversations in three areas: parent well-being, parenting a young child, and the school-community connection. The conversations generated ideas for how to design and implement activities to address identified needs. Over the coming year, partner schools and parent representatives will begin to plan for and implement many of the ideas that came out of the World Café events.

Parent Committee Representatives:
• Bright Water Montessori: Octavia (pictured left) & Jordan Webber
• Cornerstone Montessori: Yulonda Hayes
• Hmoob Toj Siab Montessori: Kao Na Lee & Say Vang
• Montessori American Indian Childcare Center: Charlene Rock & Laura Trujillo
• Siembra Montessori: Guisela Dominguez & Oshiris Sanchez

Project coordinators and evaluators:
• Montessori Center of Minnesota: Terri Strom & Nora Springer
• St. Catherine University: Fanny Jimbo-Llapa & Mary Hearst
• Consultants: Shannon Pergament & Maira Rosas-Lee

Birth to Five Early Childhood Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adults: 20</th>
<th>The Circle of Security® Parenting™ Program Cornerstone Montessori School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children: 32</td>
<td>Session Dates: January 30 – March 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Families: 17</td>
<td>Number of Sessions: 8 weekly sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Participants: 52</td>
<td>Facilitators: Terri Strom, Community Social Worker and Rebecca Nathan,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent Coach and CMS Parent, CS$P registered facilitators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Direct resource and referral is provided to individual families based on need. Assessment of need occurs through direct request and parent connections during the weekly program. There were 14 direct resource and referral contacts in 2017-2018. General resource awareness and information on social service agencies, programs and services, free and low-cost community and family events are provided weekly to all families. 32 agencies and their programs were highlighted during 2017-2018. Families reported 21 contacts with these agencies/programs.

Data
9 parents
16 children
100% of parents agreed/strongly agreed:
• I am very satisfied with this program
• I would recommend this program to a friend.

Equitable Parent Engagement:
Serving the Whole Child

“It was a good experience. Everyone came with their own struggle. Some are successful in one area, not so much in others. My main take-away was that not many parents are educated on the Montessori method. We have the whole community and parents involved. I really enjoyed it.”

— Kao Na Lee, Hmong Tao Siab

“I am honored to say that I attended this wonderful course at Cornerstone in 2018! The group I was a part of will leave everlasting impacts on my life as I grow with my daughter. The subject matter is very well authored and presented. It constantly opened group conversation, and this for me was very valuable. This course helps bring a calming reality to the fast-paced life that we all live. I encourage every family to make time in your life to enjoy this course.”

— Derek Tweten, Cornerstone Montessori School
After seven years at Cornerstone, two as an elementary guide and five as Head of School, Liesl Taylor (pictured left) is our new Director of Elementary Pedagogy. Thanks to a generous grant from the Walton Family Foundation, Liesl will work with the elementary guides to ensure smooth integration of our robust AMI curriculum with Minnesota state standards, so that the positive effects of Montessori education are documented in the children’s performance on standardized tests. She will also coordinate the paraprofessional and specialist staff (special education, literacy, school-based mental health, and English language learning), who work with children inside their classrooms rather than pulling them out for these services.

Our new Head of School, Alyssa Schwartz (pictured above), was a Montessori child herself. She finished her AMI training in London 10 years ago, the same year Cornerstone opened its doors. Even then, Cornerstone’s mission of providing high-quality AMI Montessori to all children, not just those from better-off families, caught Alyssa’s attention.

During six years of gaining confidence as a Montessori guide back home in California, followed by positions with AMI/USA that culminated in service as Interim Executive Director, Alyssa kept an eye on MCM and the Cornerstone Schools. When the Head of School opening came up, she knew instantly this was where she wanted to be. Her vision is that Cornerstone is recognized in East St. Paul as a safe, supportive place for children; in the Twin Cities as the best Montessori school available, public or otherwise; and in the larger Montessori community as the model of how to integrate high-fidelity Montessori with the requirements of a public school system.
In August 2017, Better Way Foundation awarded MCM a planning grant to engage local American Indian communities toward addressing their early childhood development needs. Better Way wanted to support systemic change through broadening the focus from education per se to human development as a whole. Indigenous communities, likewise, were looking to move beyond conventional educational methods that often counter their cultural values. Both saw Montessori as a natural fit.

MCM staff visited 10 American Indian communities over the following months, where stakeholders expressed their hopes and dreams for their youngest children. These interactions culminated at MCM in May 2018 with a summit of Native early childhood practitioners, mostly Montessorians, to explore ways to network and support their efforts across various geographies and Native nations. Paul and Lesley Kabotie of Indigenous Collaboration Inc. guided the conversation, aimed at developing an area wide indigenous early childhood strategic plan. Participants formed a Native-led organization to lead and implement the plan.

### Indigenous Summit: A National Collaboration

The two-year strategic plan will address opportunities to

- showcase the strengths of an indigenous child-centered education, and
- develop a financial sustainability plan for indigenous self-directed learning models.

These activities would lead to

- practical options for training new teachers, and
- a formal network to grow, support, and sustain indigenous child-centered development.

These strategies would create breakthrough opportunities to

- create indigenous models of education, and
- establish impactful partnerships to prompt action.
Financial Statement
Year Ending June 30, 2018

Statement of Financial Position

Assets
- Cash and Cash Equivalents: $1,909,446
- Receivables:
  - Contributions: 1,933,517
  - Tuition and Other: 179,416
  - Prepaid Expenses: 1,895
- Investments: 498,909
- Land, Building, and Equipment (less allowances for depreciation): 7,436,062
- Total Assets: $11,959,245

Liabilities
- Accounts Payable: $164,592
- Accrued Expenses: 18,187
- Deferred Revenues: 69,161
- Long-Term Debt: 1,844,416
- Total Liabilities: $1,896,356

Fund Balances
- Unrestricted: $6,742,139
- Temporarily Restricted: 3,320,750
- Total Fund Balances: $10,662,889

Total Liabilities and Fund Balances: $11,959,245

Statement of Activities

Revenues
- Fees and Tuition: $631,638
- Grants and Contributions:
  - Operations: 2,496,237
  - Capital: 350,000
  - Lease and Rental Income: 263,711
  - Investment Income: 1,309
  - Other Sources: 17,237
- Total Revenues: $3,760,132

Expenses
- Program Activities:
  - Cornerstone School: $834,950
  - Teacher Training Center: 572,075
  - Community Outreach: 295,777
  - Total Program Activities: 1,702,802
- Support Activities:
  - Management and General: 168,842
  - Fundraising: 236,766
  - Total Support Activities: 403,608
- Total Expenses: $2,106,410

Excess of Revenues over Expenses: $1,653,722

Operating Income Sources

- Contributed Revenue: 69%
- Earned Revenue: 31%

Expenses by Program Area

- Outreach: 17%
- Teacher Training: 34%
- Cornerstone Montessori School: 49%
The Montessori Center of Minnesota is humbled by your generosity. Your financial investments have helped us grow our programs and deepen our impact. This is access to education in action. You have helped make our dreams—of giving all children an opportunity to have the best education possible—a reality.

We have the great honor of serving some of the most vulnerable populations in Minnesota, and we couldn’t do it without you. Your partnership is a symbol of hope that someday all children will have access to high-quality education and highly trained teachers to foster their learning. We are grateful to the individuals, schools, organizations, corporations, and foundations who contributed to our work from July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2018.

Thank You

Our Partners

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Thank You

Our Partners
According to its mission statement, Minneapolis-based Better Way Foundation “invests in systemic, holistic, and evidence-based approaches that support the positive development of all children.” No wonder the foundation is such a strong ally of MCM.

Executive Director Andreas Hipple said Better Way believes in the Montessori pedagogy as a powerful and proven force for whole-child development. The Montessori approach, he pointed out, is well aligned with indigenous values and child development practices. Further, MCM’s partnership approach allows it to learn from, support, and be guided by people and organizations from the communities it seeks to serve.

“We are now on the verge of funding a new national indigenous Montessori network,” Hipple said, “and I am particularly impressed with — and grateful for — MCM’s ability to offer its support, wisdom, and training while respecting and valuing the need to put indigenous leadership, organization, and values at the center of this effort.”
Convinced of the value of Montessori’s educational approach, in 1960 my father joined with a group of like-minded parents to found Highland Park Montessori, the first Montessori school in St. Paul. My brother Jim attended that school.

But my father’s vision of what was possible for all children, and for society, went far beyond one school. In 1969, he helped found the Montessori Foundation of Minnesota — known today as the Montessori Center of Minnesota — with a mission, in part, to “assist the poor, the physically and mentally handicapped, and the children of the outcast in our society.”

In his 1971 message as president of the Foundation, Dad wrote, “The idea of equality of opportunity is a mere sham and pretense unless children are afforded a chance, especially in their early years, to lay a foundation for building their lives.” A Montessori education, he noted, lays a foundation that “is not confined to the acquisition of academic skills. It is even more concerned with fostering integrative moral character growth by providing environmental, social, and academic opportunities for the exercise of independence, judgment, and ordered practical responsibility.”

This type of high-quality education, in turn, “must be backed by a teacher education and training program which is vigilantly and continuously improved. Further, it demands a continuous concern for the refinement of educational principles, as well as innovative, practical application of basic research.” Such research, Dad recognized, is key to raising awareness of the benefits of Montessori: “an effort must be mounted so that Montessori education can never again be dismissed as a kind of summer lightning or superficial fad. This happened earlier in the century. We have a social and educational obligation to prevent it from happening again.”

My father’s vision of equal opportunity to a high-quality education and his insights into how to achieve it are the same principles on which the Montessori Center of Minnesota bases its work toward bringing high-quality Montessori education to all children, regardless of means, and training more diverse teachers to serve them. Thank you, Dad, for inspiring the mission we continue to carry out today.
Thank You
Volunteers + Staff

Each day, dedicated community members help us put access in action through sharing their skills, volunteering their time, and hosting our trainees in their school environments. Our volunteers have turned our mission from an idea into real social change. This year, volunteers held parent community events, mentored teacher trainees and alumni, and supported the growth of our programs through outreach. Thank all of you for all you do on behalf of children.

“Working here has been a rewarding experience; knowing that I am helping make a change in all of these amazing children’s lives and how they turn around their futures, then there is no true equity or inclusion. Access is the key to open the door to opportunity.”

— Barbara Williams

“I love the mission of CMS/MCM because ... the word access is in the mission. We can talk about equity, diversity, and inclusion and give resources, but if people have to keep coming back to you for assistance because they do not have access to the resources you are giving them, then there is no true equity or inclusion. Access is the key to open the door to opportunity.”

— Kara Younkin Viswanathan