



# HIMS

## Monthly News

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**ARTICLES, EVENTS, PHOTOS, & MORE!**

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*May*  
**2023**

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# A School Where We All Belong

I like a good heart to heart conversation. I like listening to other people's perspectives. I like being in a room with people who think like me and people who think differently than me. I like learning and being open. I know that most other people do, too. Humans are curious and loving creatures by nature. We are meant to learn from one another, not just in theory but in physiology. It helps our brains grow! However the past couple of years have really thrown a wrench into things. People have strong and sometimes polarizing opinions. Media and social media tend to lead us into an echo chamber. In a world where everything feels politicized, finding points of unity can be hard.

At HMS, we believe in leaning into our mission and school values—connection, inclusivity, respect, integrity, and optimism—in the work we do. These values are on the forefront of my mind a lot. The value that's been on my mind the most lately is inclusivity. How do we include all voices and all students when we have different perspectives, views, fears, opinions? How do we navigate big topics such as school safety, health policies, technology use, historical perspectives, diversity and equity when we sometimes view these through different lenses? How do we avoid politics in such a politicized world? How do we avoid becoming a school where everyone is like-minded? How do we remain flexible to the needs of a changing society and a changing student body? And, most importantly, what brings us together?

Today I'd like to take a closer look at DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion). It is something we are committed to as a school and it also can be a hot-button topic. Not everyone defines it the same way and the "buzzwordiness" of it can sometimes take away from the underlying meaning. If we aren't all working from the same definition or looking through the same lens there are still ways that we can come together. We can do this by centering the children, which is the heart of Montessori and the heart of our school mission.

Centering the children means that we want to make sure all children and their families feel belonging. We want people to be proud of their families, their heritage, their traditions, their beliefs, and their identities. It's easy to say and more challenging to do, but it's part of Montessori education. We talk a lot about the work of Dr. Maria Montessori, but it was her son Mario who further developed her cultural curriculum for elementary students. This part of the curriculum is based on the Fundamental Needs of humans. The thesis is that all humans have the same basic needs, but how we meet those needs depends on time and place. For example early humans needed food, shelter, defense, etc. Just as we today need those things. However, how we obtain those things are quite different from how our ancestors did it. And we also know that where someone is geographically and economically makes a difference in how needs are met, as well. How I meet my needs today looks different than someone across the world who is meeting those same needs at the same time

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. It's actually quite beautiful to look at similarities and differences together in this framework. It really focuses on our unity and oneness. I also think it's poignant that culture and community have always been part of this work—inclusivity was a Montessori value decades and decades ago. And we know that the idea of needs and culture evolves over time, Montessori education is designed to adapt and flex with the times. It's important to remember that we can embrace what is special and unique about each child without doing so at the expense of another. We can do this without people feeling guilty or ashamed of their beliefs, their history, and who they are.

As I've shared before, we believe in the benefit of providing students with windows and mirrors in their classroom. Windows provide children with a look at the world around them: people, traditions, and customs that look different than their own and mirrors provide an opportunity to see themselves, their own traditions and their own beliefs. Literature is a great place to celebrate unity in diversity. One of my favorite children's books is *Throw Your Tooth on the Roof*. When I taught in the lower elementary classroom we read an entry of this book every time someone lost a tooth! And believe me, when you are working with 6-9 year olds, that's a pretty constant stream. We loved learning that when children in Egypt lose a tooth they fling it at the sun, while children in Afghanistan place their teeth in mouse holes!

I think it's safe to say that we all value character building and opportunities for students to be curious, not just about math equations, but also about people and society. I also think it's safe to say that with so many messages out there it's scary to not have total control over what your child is and isn't being exposed to at school. At HMS we try to be as transparent as possible, while still being clear that things may come up as we go. In that spirit of transparency and desire to keep the conversation going, I've pasted our policy on DEI below. I welcome conversations and questions. I welcome you to bring your concerns my way. Let's continue to be a school, who in the spirit of Montessori, allows everyone to feel belonging.

Warmly,

*Aimee*



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## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

In order to nurture the whole child and adolescent it is important that we give them age-appropriate opportunities to understand what is going on in the world. Montessori education has always emphasized peace and justice with the ultimate goals being to:

1. Create a sense of belonging for every child/adolescent.
2. Build understanding and learn from one another: moving toward equity and inclusion, not division.
3. Help create a more peaceful and just world.

<b>What we Do</b>	<b>What we don't do</b>
Embrace all families and have developmentally appropriate conversations about our world. This may include a myriad of topics including, but not limited to race, gender, ability, culture, civics, etc.	Blame, shame, or guilt children. Put our personal politics on the child. Avoid topics because they are uncomfortable.
Have books, art, and discussions that allow students to have windows and mirrors into the world.	Tell families or students they can't bring in a particular book or beloved author.
Look at our curriculum and materials and update anything that harmfully perpetuates stereotypes.	Introduce a new curriculum without it being approved. The new curriculum must be aligned with Montessori education.
Look at many reputable sources to understand events in science and history. Tell stories from multiple perspectives.	Allow students to opt out of parts of our curriculum.
Allow students to ask questions and talk about topics that they feel passionately about.	Tell children what to think.
Understand that having families with varied backgrounds, experiences, politics, etc only makes our community richer.	Judge or exclude families.
Encourage confidence, competence, and individuality in a connected community.	Encourage conformity.
Create an environment where all children feel welcome and included.	Ignore important facets of a child's identity and culture.



# Around Campus





# Upcoming Events

**May 16th** HMS Annual Meeting (via Zoom)

**May 19th**

**Maria Montessori**  
**THE MUSICAL**  
BOOK, MUSIC & LYRICS BY MARK WOODWARD



Purchase tickets here:

<https://forms.gle/rQUCw1MLpBbjHAZ58>

**May 23rd**

Summer Success Pathway w/ Dr. Luz Casquejo Johnston

**May 25th**

Toddler to EC Transition Night

**May 29th**

School Closed - **★★★★★★★★**  
**MEMORIAL DAY**

**May 30th**

2023-2024 School Calendar Pre-Orders Open!

**June 1st**

Jr. High Only - Noon Dismissal for Conferences

**June 3rd**

Gig Harbor Maritime Parade  
*Be sure to wear your Tie Dye HMS Shirt!*



**June 8th**

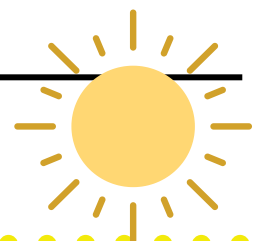
Early Childhood Art Walk

**June 12th**

Transition Evening

**June 14th**

Last Day of School -1pm dismissal  
*(infant/toddler regular schedule)*



# Practical Life. Is It Really Just Pouring Water?

By Mel Megee, Magnolia Room Teacher



Here we are, it's already May and all of us are thinking about the end of the year and approaching summer. I have been giving some thought about what to write for this article, peace education, critical thinking in the EC classroom, motivation or how Montessori supports the development of self-esteem. At the same time, I have been in the midst of revisiting Practical Life and the philosophy behind it, recently. Then it dawned on me all of these topics can be found in Practical Life.

Children's development in the early years is making connections between the brain and body, control of movement. It seems like such a simple thing to us being adults but think about the control a small hand needs to hold a spoon, scoop up the cereal, steady the hand so the cereal stays on the spoon while opening the mouth to successfully deposit the cereal in the intended target. The child is intrinsically motivated, once they find success, a feeling of satisfaction and peace comes over them, they gain self-esteem and independence. This is what Practical Life gives the child in the classroom.

The work in the PL area begins with simple skills such as spooning and pouring progressing to work with many more steps such as handwashing. The work is freely chosen by the child along with Guide,( the adult) observing to offer a lesson if needed. The child has a lesson and is free to do the work. Again so much learning is taking place, exploration for instance, the child tries to pour the water using a funnel, the funnel could overflow if the water is poured too fast, oops the water is all over the tray instead of in the vessel. What now? The adult or another child can step in to show how to clean up the spill. Yes, the children joyfully rush to help clean up spills. Just think how you feel when the unexpected happens and help arrives without even asking. It is a wonderful feeling isn't it? The children practice cleaning and preparing the lesson for the next person who may want to take it off of the shelf. They begin to think of others, to feel connected to the community, this is the beginning of their inner peace and a peaceful classroom.

Learning is a cycle of trial and error, some things are easy, some things not so much and it is an individual path that is supported by adults and the environment. Practical Life meets the child where they are and begins the process of concentration, coordination, order and independence. In the midst of mastery there could be new discoveries, it's all part of the process. This is why it is so important for the adult not to intervene in the child's purposeful exploration. The philosophy behind the PL curriculum is the foundation of the classroom. The obvious lesson for the child may be pouring water from one container to another but the hidden curriculum is vast leading the child to personal transformation and bigger work in the future.

## Works Cited

K. Bravo, J. Wolf, et. al. *Practical Life: Theory and Lesson Plans*. The Center for Guided Montessori Studies, 2008.

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/how-to-motivate-children-science-based-approaches-for-parents-caregivers-and-teachers/>

# Board Corner

My name is Nancy Leahy, and I am honored to be the newest addition to the HMS Board of Trustees. My husband and I relocated from SE Idaho to Gig Harbor eleven years ago. I am a retired Montessori trained teacher, with both Montessori and public school teaching experience. I have 2 grown “boys” who both live in the Bellevue area. When I first arrived in Gig Harbor, I eagerly sought a connection with HMS and worked P/T and subbed with the school until 2020.

My love affair with Montessori began over 20 years ago when I was offered an Upper Elementary intern position with the Snake River Montessori School. At the time, I had nearly obtained my Elementary Education teaching certificate, and just felt like something wasn't quite right with the conventional approach to teacher training. There was not enough focus on preparing the child and the environment for robust learning, and too much attention was on teacher needs, curriculum standards, and student scores and behavior problems. I knew only a minimum of Montessori's method, but knew and admired many of the people who were part of that local school community. I threw myself into training, teaching, and loving Montessori.

Emphasizing choice and independence, along with learning self control through responsibility, Montessori's approach to classroom education is fundamentally different. With the teacher's careful guidance, parent support, and consistency, children naturally develop a positive sense of self. By experiencing the thrill of accomplishing difficult tasks, and learning to self pace, children can avoid feeling the frustration of failing and being left behind, or languishing while other classmates catch up.

Additionally, the spirit of encouragement and support among students seemed magical. Any of you who have had the chance to help a peer understand something or to learn something from a peer understands the delight of being successful. The old saying “through teaching, we learn” applies perfectly to the multi-age student coaching and group projects that occur in the Montessori classroom. Isn't support of each others' progress and success an aspect of society that we could all use a little more of? How fortunate the children of Montessori schools are to experience it from their first days of learning.

Which takes me back to why I started my conversion to Montessori education. It was the community within that school who took a chance and hired me. To this day, some of my closest and most treasured friendships started with parents and fellow staff in that school. It was our shared experiences, challenges, and successes that made the bond unbreakable. Montessori isn't just a place to send your child to school, it's a way of life.

As I looked around the room at “Lights, Camera, Auction” and saw the shared joy and affection among parents whose children share a classroom, among faculty and parents, across generations and walks of life, I felt that same admiration of community I had seen before. Montessori is like a magic spell, and we are all under it.

Nancy Leahy  
HMS Board Trustee



# Board Corner

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On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to thank each and every one of you for supporting the children of HMS through the school's annual auction. What a fun evening! We raised over \$30K. Amazing! A big shoutout goes to our parent co-chairs: Sarah Baker and Melisa Parish. Thank you for the hard work that both of you plus your volunteers put in. We could not have done it without you all.

Just a reminder that on Tuesday, May 16 at 5:30pm Aimee will be leading all of us in the 2022/2023 annual meeting: State of the School. Please feel free to join us via Zoom. Look for a link in the upcoming weeks. We hope to see you there.

Have a wonderful month of May! We are grateful to all of you.

Wendy Holt  
HMS Board of Trustees Chair





# Around Campus

