Orangevale Teachers Attend American Montessori Annual Conference

Several of the Orangevale teachers and the dean of students had the opportunity to attend the AMS Conference in Denver this spring.

CMP supports this incredible professional development event through the budget, knowing that the teachers will bring back knowledge and ideas to share with their students. It is also a rejuvenating experience, mingling with a multitude of Montessori educators from around the world.

Following are articles from the attendees who wished to share just a little of what they learned.

Brittany Akinaka
2/3 Teacher ~ Joshua Tree

After attending the AMS conference in San Diego during the 2017 school year, I was very eager to attend another conference. I jumped at the chance for this year, since I am a newer Montessorian who would greatly benefit from more direct exposure of all things Montessori. Not only is it a prospect for learning new techniques, but there are many other aspects that I did not realize. There are people from all over the world that have a great passion for Montessori. We all had an opportunity to network with diverse crowds who all have that one great thing in common. Lastly, I got to team build with my colleagues, who I see every day, but don’t have that much quality time together. Also, there were numerous vendors selling a variety of items that are made specifically for a Montessori classroom. It was a fantastic event, and I am very passionate that every CMP staff member should have this opportunity at some point in his or her career!

Several workshops were offered each day. I had a few that really resonated with me. Friday, I attended a workshop called Cosmic Education. As a Montessori school, we have a responsibility to teach diverse ideas. As an educator we often forget our passion that is diluted by the daily routine. This workshop helped refresh ideas that are instilled in the Montessori curriculum.

The second one that I really enjoyed was a workshop titled Supporting the Dysregulated Child. We discussed why a child may be behaving badly, whether that be from trauma...
and/or different kinds of stress in his or her life. The presenter had a rich background that has provided her with the essential skills to help other teachers. This workshop provided some great methods to help a spectrum of children in the classroom.

Jen Foxx-Smith  
Middle School Teacher ~ Zion

The 2018 AMS Conference in Denver this March was amazing. I was very impressed with the amount of workshops geared toward secondary (middle and high school) Montessori. There was also a working luncheon for secondary teachers where we were able to network with other teachers and a few administrators from our grade levels from around the country. This was a great opportunity to share ideas with one another and to ask questions/seek answers pertaining to secondary education.

Rick Steves was our kick-off keynote speaker. His presentation was very inspirational and was a wonderful start for the conference. He talked about how travel makes us diverse thinkers, and as teachers we can bring our travel experiences into the classroom and encourage our students to learn about world. He ended by saying that when you travel you see that the world truly is filled with hope and joy.

My favorite workshop was the “Prepared Environment for Elders with Dementia.” I must admit what initially intrigued me about this workshop was for personal reasons, as my mother was diagnosed with dementia almost three years ago. I was very excited to find out while in the workshop how it was directly related to secondary immersion trips. Presenter Cameron Camp has many years of experience connecting elder care facilities with local youth through schools, and creating amazing successful learning experiences for both dementia patients and middle and high school students. Cameron said a quote that really struck me. “You lose your sense of self when you don’t have an environment that is prepared for where you are at in life. Without this connection, the person disengages in life.” Wow! What a take away for us as Montessorians and as humanitarians.

Anika Greene  
Upper Elementary Teacher ~ Haleakala

First of all, I want to express my gratitude in being supported in order to attend the 2018 AMS Conference. I had the opportunity to attend the 2017 AMS Conference, and it was an eye opener in how to teach the Montessori way. Many of the workshops were enlightening, and I was able to bring ideas from those workshops and implement them into my classroom, and plan for implementation school-wide, particularly with activism in our community, as well as globally.

One of my passions is teaching STEM (science, technology, engineering, math), so that all students maintain their excitement and engagement through these crucial years. I was ecstatic to learn that Dale Dougherty, the founder of Make: Magazine and Maker Faire was a Keynote Speaker. I have been attending the Maker Faire for the past 7 years as an exhibitor and have always wanted to know how to implement a “maker” mindset in the classroom. The maker movement is a collection of students, teachers, tinkerers, techies, hobbyists, and others who come together with the purpose of creating, designing, building, inventing, and in general making; therefore, bringing their ideas to fruition. The Maker Faire is an incredible experience that can be brought into the classroom, and I was enthused to learn where to start.

At the heart of the Montessori educational experience is giving the child the freedom to explore and learn through those explorations. This is a perfect marriage with the maker
movement in which ideas come to life through exploration. I learned ways to use this at our CMP campus both during school and after school. My last conference experience left me enthused to come back to my classroom and share all that I had learned with my students. By combining my passion for STEM education and my enthusiasm for Montessori education, I will come back even more ready to combine the two.

Teci Jarnagin  
Dean of Students  

The workshop that impressed me the most was Understanding a Child with Trauma History.

I am seeing more and more children who are in need of mental health services due to trauma in their lives. While this workshop was not aimed at mental health services, it was very informative from the perspective as a mother, teacher, and administrator.

Negative behavior is often seen in a child who has experienced trauma, in addition to having sensory issues, being socially withdrawn, and experiencing learning issues, such as memory challenges. One statement that stood out to me was… “See the child for the child”…

• Don’t confuse diagnosis/behavior with who the child is  
• Behavior is a symptom, not the root cause  
• What happened to this child? NOT what is wrong with this child?

Other factors that affect a child’s brain development are:

• Age at delivery – premature babies are sensitive to noise, light, and movement  
• Early experiences dictate the neural pathways that are developed  
• Chronic stress alters blood flow (oxygen) to the brain.
Additionally, trauma negatively affects executive functioning, social skills, social emotional learning, and judgement skills, with transitions and unstructured time being more difficult, as well.

Although these facts are heartbreaking, the good news is … as parents, teachers, and administrators, we can make a difference through the development of positive relationships, giving positive reinforcements, and creating positive environments.

“Respect all the reasonable forms of activity in which the child engages and try to understand them.”  
~ Maria Montessori

Local Control & Accountability Plan

Several years ago, Governor Brown developed a new funding model for public schools: The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). All public schools were now funded through the state in a fashion similar to how charter schools had been funded, which was a Block Grant model.

This now allowed districts to have more freedom in determining how to spend funds to benefit their schools. What the state requires is a Local Control & Accountability Plan (LCAP), a three-year plan updated each year, that lays out the districts’ plans. A critical piece to the LCAP is obtaining stakeholder input from parents, students, and staff.

Each year, CMP’s executive director, Gary Bowman, comes to a Principal’s Café to obtain feedback from parents, then later meets with some students, and then the staff.

This year, Orangevale’s LCAP meeting is set for 8:15 AM on Friday, May 4th in the MP Room. All parents are encouraged to attend and share ideas of how best to improve the Orangevale Campus and its program.

The current LCAP can be found on the CMP website under “Who We Are.”