Annual Report
2017-2018
Mission Statement

The mission of Austin Montessori School is to guide the intellectual and character development of each child along a path towards his full and unknown potential. We strive to cultivate compassion and respect, independence and belonging, and freedom and self-discipline, in rich academic and social environments that are designed for each plane of development and honor the complementary needs of the individual and the group. We value an educational setting that is inclusive and recognizes the authentic nature of the child and nurtures a reverence for the organic order of the universe.

Through parent and staff education, we work to develop a school and family culture that preserves and protects a healthy childhood. Our aim is to serve children possessing an ample range of temperaments and a variety of learning styles and rates. At the same time, we seek to avoid pathologizing and labeling the normal range of children’s behaviors and differences in learning. We are dedicated to Montessori's mission of world peace through human development.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

President – Clara Serrano
Vice President – Christina Pesoli
Secretary – Maggie Walsh
Treasurer – Chris Howard
Member – David Spence
Member – Jenny Carloye
Member – Aaron Terwey
Ex Officio – Grae Baker
Ex Officio – Sandy Bartholome

LOCATIONS

Administrative Office
5006 Sunset Trail
Austin, Texas 78745
512-892-0253 (phone)
512-891-9875 (fax)
info@austinmontessori.org

Sunset Trail/Jones Road Campus
2904 & 2906 Jones Road
4910-4912 & 5006-5016 Sunset Trail
Austin, Texas 78745

Great Northern Campus
6917 & 6819 Great Northern Boulevard
Austin, Texas 78757
512-450-1940

Gaines Creek Campus
5677 Oak Boulevard
Austin, Texas 78735
512-892-0826
In dark times we work the soil for the bright seeds of hope! In disaster we look for the helpers. In times of conflict we look for the just and compassionate peacemakers. Our children are our bright seeds. And we are their helpers. They are becoming the just and compassionate peacemakers.

Montessori’s Education for Peace shows us how to work for a better future, a finer humanity, and a more powerfully peaceful society through understanding the true characteristics of children and meeting their authentic needs. We have learned that the nature of the child is to self-develop and self-educate fully in the present, not to labor under the pressure of a scheduled and imposed curriculum aimed at a far-flung future. We now understand child’s nature well enough to forge the strong and supportive relationships of guidance children need to flourish within a well-conceived and expansively provisioned developmental and learning environment.

In the Austin Montessori School Community we help our children prepare themselves for their unknowable future by strengthening their will, not by breaking it, by expanding their field of age-appropriate and worthy choices, not by directly controlling them, and by trusting and guiding their inner drive, not by thwarting it. We prepare our children’s environment both at home and at school for action and experience and provide the materials and opportunities for their maximum effort. We forge strong and loving relationships through which we circumscribe boundaries and set firm limits. We show our children trust and hope, not fear; we give them an expansive present, not a future-based obsession. We help our children prepare themselves for their future by giving them the fullest rights to a present that recognizes their true characteristics and meets their authentic needs. This is Montessori’s Education for Peace.

Here at school we provide our children the environment and the relationships for self-development and self-education for the purpose of satisfying broadly and deeply their present characteristics and needs as children, not for consciously preparing themselves for a remote adulthood. We give our children the freedom and responsibility to reach a deep concentration in a cycle of chosen work to achieve fulfillment in the present. This is how children heal themselves of both common everyday hurts and even of deeper wounds, how they renew and energize themselves, how they make themselves more wholly who they are. We work from an active and powerful trust in the nature of the child. We guide and steer them to set their own goals in their own way and fulfill their own expectations in their own time. This is Education for Peace.

Montessori has shown us how children can grow into adults capable of becoming a Humanity that can form a Society which is capable of establishing a just and enduring Peace. On the other hand, her scientific observation of the child revealed that traditional schooling and upbringing tend to weaken and distort children’s character. Dr. Montessori’s advanced studies in anthropology and psychology
Founder’s Remarks
Continued

convinced her that the adult that child would most often become has been rendered incapable of pursuing a lasting peace. Yet society and traditional schooling are a constant pull on us as a community, threatening to shake our resolve and compromise our practices. In steadfast response to that pull, our school perseveres in strengthening our Montessori principles and practice.

In Montessori homes and schools today, we face the enormous challenge of unabated, albeit well-meaning, pressure from both without and within to return to greater and greater conformity with traditional education’s obsolete practices and a well-meaning but ill-informed society’s insistence on age-inappropriate upbringing. Over the decades, as Montessori schools age, some strengthen and refine their practice, while others weaken, tending to succumb to old societal demands for upbringing and traditional school practices. Although they may remain fine alternative schools, they have lost the elements of Montessori that matter most, more than the materials and environments. They have lost the respect and protection for choice, will, concentration, and cycles of activity that should infuse it all, that are the foundation for Education for Peace.

When Montessori was new to us, the thrill of it all drove us deeper and energized our practice. Now that Montessori is well established, we risk growing complacent, cutting corners. We risk seeking to go along and get along with larger educational movements and organizations. We risk relaxing into acquiescence to internal pressures. We risk seeking out more conformity in order to qualify for funding opportunities. Against such risks, and because the ultimate purpose of Montessori is Education for Peace, our school chose Grae Baker, a leader who is young enough, brave enough, and wise enough to steer our school into the future, secure and firm in Montessori practice. May we all stand with Grae as he stands steadfastly for Montessori’s Education for Peace.

Donna Bryant Goertz
Founder/Director Emeritat
As I walked onto the campus of Austin Montessori School on August 1, 2017, it felt like the beginning of something new. The school had just celebrated its 50th anniversary - a year of great celebration. We celebrated the rich history of our school and all who contributed to its remarkable evolution as a flagship Montessori institution over the past half-century. We also mourned, having lost two stalwart members of our community; Donald C. Goertz, PhD, and John Snyder, who were instrumental in our school’s growth and development over those 50 years. As head of school, I had just completed my first “three-year cycle,” as it is known in Montessori parlance, implying a deeper level of orientation, connection, and commitment. In some ways I was walking into the beginning of the future of Austin Montessori School on that blazing hot August day - a humbling prospect, to be sure. Yet, I felt excited and energized knowing that as an integrated community we would visualize and co-craft our future. And I’m happy to report, in year 51 of our school’s history, together we marched resolutely into that endeavor.

Beginning in the fall of 2017, we partnered with educational consulting industry leader, Ian Symmonds & Associates, to create a long-range strategic plan designed to articulate a future vision of Austin Montessori School and to develop a roadmap for achieving this vision. This work unfolded over the course of the 2017-2018 school year, with the final plan to be presented during the 2018-2019 school year.

With an eye towards the future, our school was also focused on continued growth and refinement in the present. In order to deepen our classroom support and community connections both externally and internally, three new administrative positions were created. Jinny Gonzalez, former Laurel Cottage guide, assumed the responsibilities of Early Childhood Coordinator, a position designed to create cohesive support for our Parent/Infant program, Youngest Children’s Communities, and Children’s House program. Longtime administrator for our Great Northern campus, Amanda Brown, stepped into the role of Director of Development, continuing to cultivate a culture of philanthropy at AMS. Finally, Sveta Pais began serving in the role of Parent Partnership Coordinator, enhancing our connection and outreach to current families through parent education and workshops.

We implemented a new integrated school operations software suite with three major components which would 1) enhance school parent communications in the form of the new myAMS portal, 2) establish a more efficient enrollment management system, including streamlining tuition payment and financial aid systems for our families, and 3) design and roll out a new school website.

We continued our commitment to the AMS staff’s professional growth and development by sponsoring five staff members for AMI Primary training. Erik Rivas-Rivas, Nicholas Pippins, Socorro Aguilar, and Jessica Whinery began their Primary training in 2018 at a new, three-summer course offered in Austin through the Montessori Institute of North Texas. Mariah Stewart will attend the Primary training course at Montessori Northwest in Portland, Oregon over the course of the 2018-2019 school year.

As we turn to a new chapter in our school’s history, I’m grateful that we are writing these chapters together. Through continued community engagement, we will help make these visions a reality. As the numbers and narrative herein reflect, the state of our school remains strong and we are poised to create a very bright future for Austin Montessori School.

Grae Baker
Head of School
**OUR COMMUNITY**

**PARENT & INFANT COMMUNITY**
- Ages 2 months - 15 months
- 20 Students

**YOUNGEST CHILDREN’S COMMUNITIES**
- Ages 18 months - 3 years
- Butterfly & Hummingbird Gardens
- 25 Students

**CHILDREN’S HOUSE COMMUNITIES**
- Ages 3 - 6 years
- Cypress, Laurel, Redbud, Magnolia, Pomegranate & Persimmon Cottages
- 149 Students

**EARLY ELEMENTARY COMMUNITIES**
- Ages 6 - 9 years
- Birdsong, Heartsong & Windsong
- 79 Students

**UPPER ELEMENTARY COMMUNITIES**
- Ages 9 - 12 years
- Nova & Terra
- 59 Students

**ADOLESCENT COMMUNITY**
- Ages 12 - 15 years
- Gaines Creek
- 52 Students

**ADMINISTRATIVE & SUPPORT STAFF**

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<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Founder/Director Emerita</td>
<td>Donna Bryant Goertz*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director Emeritus</td>
<td>Donald C. Goertz</td>
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<td>Head of School</td>
<td>Ghee Baker*</td>
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<td>Elementary Coordinator</td>
<td>Joseph Aken*</td>
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<td>Business Manager</td>
<td>Sandy Bartholome</td>
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<td>Communications Coordinator &amp; Librarian</td>
<td>Sonal Bowness</td>
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<td>Director of Development</td>
<td>Amanda Brown</td>
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<td>Office Assistant</td>
<td>Robbie Burnett</td>
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<td>Shuttle Driver</td>
<td>Lucinda Castillo</td>
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<td>Early Childhood Coordinator</td>
<td>Jimmy Gonzalez*</td>
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<td>Community Support</td>
<td>Jesse Jahnke*</td>
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<td>Great Northern Campus Operations</td>
<td>Kelly Jarrell*</td>
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<td>Admissions Coordinator</td>
<td>Cheryl McGee*</td>
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<td>Director of Admissions</td>
<td>Dawn Michal</td>
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<td>Office Manager</td>
<td>Patricia Orlt*</td>
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<td>Parent Partnership Coordinator</td>
<td>Sveti Pais</td>
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<td>Maintenance Director</td>
<td>Jerry Pippins</td>
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<td>Early Arrival/South Campus Support</td>
<td>Johnna Shelton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caretaker</td>
<td>Francesca Tejeda</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caretaker</td>
<td>Juan Tejeda</td>
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**CASITA**
- Leaders
- Lynn Hunt
- Lee Ann Perry

**CLUBHOUSE**
- Leaders
- Mandy Weeks
- Jessica Whinery

**CLUB MUNDI**
- Leader
- Toto Miranda

**MUSIC**
- Dave Bartholome, Piano
- Rebecca Lester, Strings
- Brooks & Jennifer Whitmore, Piano

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**CLASSROOM GUIDES & ASSISTANTS**

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<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Guides</th>
<th>Assistants</th>
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<tr>
<td>PARENT &amp; INFANT COMMUNITY</td>
<td>Erin Boardman*, Gwen Logan*, Paije Long*, Margarita Ruiz*</td>
<td>Socorro Aguilar, Laura Clapp, Mary Ann Collins, Acacia Covington, Mariah Stewart, Matt Williams</td>
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<tr>
<td>YOUNGEST CHILDREN’S COMMUNITIES</td>
<td>Abigail Adams, Mireille Blond, Yates Phillips</td>
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<td>CHILDREN’S HOUSE COMMUNITIES</td>
<td>Angela Eagle*, Jessenia Giron*, Kate Hearne*, Aran Klingensmith*, Gabrielle Kotkov*, Valerie Pheasant*, Priya Salem*, Elizabeth Suggs*</td>
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<td>EARLY ELEMENTARY COMMUNITIES</td>
<td>Diana Day*, Erik Rivas-Rivas*, Jamie Stone*</td>
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<td>Assistants</td>
<td>Laurel Gressett, Kat Hartley, Chris Long</td>
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<td>UPPER ELEMENTARY COMMUNITIES</td>
<td>Libby Head*, Nicholas Pippins*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistants</td>
<td>Elena Covey, Worth Koch, Khara Vincent</td>
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<td>ADOLESCENT COMMUNITY</td>
<td>Jesse Gevirtz*, Thomas Logan, Veronique Mareen, Kathryn Noack, Bill Sneed, Joe Whinery</td>
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*Has received an AMI diploma
Here are just a few of the memorable events that helped build and energize this strong community of parents, staff and children at Austin Montessori School.

**AMSPA Back to School Family Picnics** at both Sunset Trail and Great Northern brought us together to reconnect after the long summer, welcoming new families and old back to another school year at AMS.

Families and staff loved working together at our **Outdoor Environment Days**, renewing and beautifying the gardens and play areas. Side by side we cared for the land that is our home.

**Bluegrass Night** at the Adolescent Community at Gaines Creek continued to be a hugely popular whole-family event, full of good food, fun activities, and entertainment, all hosted by the adolescents in our community.

**18th Annual Fall Festival** brought us together for fun, fellowship, food and fundraising, as each classroom community sponsored an activity or cultural presentation.

**Theater Night** at the Adolescent Community was a truly entertaining event for the cast, crew and theater guests.

In addition to much-loved story times from guides, the **Annual Book Drive** prompted the donation of over 220 new books for our libraries and classrooms.

Our annual **Town Hall Meeting** provided a closer look at the inner workings and financials of Austin Montessori School.

Our school community came together for **Gala 2018** in late April. The auction was a night to remember with dinner, dancing, celebration and fundraising totaling over $76,000 for our school.

We hosted a full slate of **Parent Education Events**, including Parent Gatherings and other meetings, a Parent Book Group, Parent/Infant Classes with Gwen Logan, many Coffees with Grae Baker and parenting courses led by various staff members.

The **Parent Association Events** were very popular this year, including a parent happy hour at the Driskill, family night at the Mighty Thomas Carnival, an Evening with Grae, and a fabulous Springtacular Market.
Financial Summary

The Board of Trustees, with the Head of School, maintains the financial stability of the school through a board-approved budget that ensures predictable revenue and well-managed expenses.

Revenue for the year ending July 2018 totaled $4.92 million, up from $4.67 million in the prior year. Operating expenses totaled $4.67 million, up from $4.34 million in the prior year, yielding a net income of $250,488. Non-operating expenses totaled $254,344, which included $60,761 in capital improvement expenditures and $193,583 in debt reduction.

For the last 5 years, the school has increased enrollment and planned for modest increases to cash reserves.

Enrollment for the year was up 5% from the prior year, and as of July 2018 the average cash reserves were at 4.3 months of operating expenses.

As a non-profit school, philanthropy continues to play an important role in our financial foundation. A strong Annual Fund and Spring Gala combine with a disciplined operating budget to help keep tuition affordable for our families.

**OPERATING EXPENSES**
- Administrative Expense & Other ................. 342,477
- Instructional Expense .................................. 282,541
- Financial Aid for Students ............................ 241,823
- Financing Expense ...................................... 75,067
- Salaries & Benefits ...................................... 3,240,077
- Staff Development ....................................... 80,661
- Facilities Operation Expense ....................... 409,452

Total .......................................................... $4,672,098

**NON-OPERATING EXPENSES**
- Capital Improvements .................................. 60,761
- Principal Payments on Debt .......................... 193,583

Total .......................................................... $254,344

**REVENUE**
- Tuition & Fees ............................................ 4,738,287
- Fundraising & Donations ............................... 184,299

Total Income .............................................. $4,922,586