



## Minutes

**January 24, 2024**

**The Montessori School at SoHo**

**School Tour at 3:30 p.m.**

**Meeting at 4:00 p.m.**

Meeting called to order at 4:21pm.

Attendees included *in-person*: Diane Lanci, Sadiya Muniruddin, Diane Nickerson, Sheba Kapur, Bethany Ciulla, Karen Kapoor, and Susan Kambrich; and, *via Zoom*: Kat Walker, Lianne Pinciotti, Jennifer Fuggini, Anna Rita Pergolizzi-Wentworth (NYC Liaison), Kimberly Le Lay (Long Island liaison), Brianna Banahan (Westchester Liaison), and Roslyn Moran.

President Diane Lanci welcomed the attendees for a hybrid meeting held at The Montessori School at SoHo. Secretary Diane Nickerson motioned for the approval of the minutes of the October 2024 Group Meeting, Diane L seconded the motion, and the minutes were unanimously approved. Treasurer Sadiya Muniruddin gave the financial report (attached). The current account balance remains at \$14,664.28, and increase due in part to the growth in membership.

Diane L. and Sheba, along with representatives from MPPI, met with the executive director of NYAEYC to move forward an initiative for NYS to adopt the Montessori EC credential for the status of ECE 3, and have requested for there to be consideration in the distinction from regulations different from NYC (DOH) and the rest of the state (OCFS).

Lianne reported on a new development for organizing our membership outreach and establishing an increased census, including adding NYSMA Regions, each facilitated by a Regional Liaison. A new category has been added to sort by the criteria for the type of school, such as: independent (LLC vs nonprofit), public, and charter. Some volunteers to fill the liaison role have come forward already, and are in attendance at today's meeting. Next steps will be coordinated among the liaisons, especially to create regional communities to address local needs, questions, and advocacy work. It is proposed that regions hold their own in-person meetings concurrent with the NYSMA hybrid quarterly meetings.

Diane L reported ongoing progress in collaborative work with QUALITYstarsNY, encouraging more Montessori early childhood programs to take advantage of the

recognition and support offered by this statewide program. For this work, a crosswalk aligning the QUALITYstarsNY with Montessori learning standards will be important.

Sheba presented a link to a 3-minute online survey with a request that all attendees, and subsequently all NYS Montessori schools, complete which will be helpful for the board to learn the interests of Montessorians for future meeting presentations.

**Presenter:** Jessica Zambito MS OTR/L

**Topic:** Occupational Therapy

Jessica founded BLOOM Sensory Gym after more than thirteen years of passionate work as an occupational therapist specializing in pediatrics. She utilizes an evidence-based, holistic, neuro- and sensory-integrative approach in working with children. She owns three established private therapy practices, including Bloom OT and Spring Ahead OT.

Jessica has practiced in a variety of pediatric settings with ages 0-18. She has worked in public, charter & private schools, early intervention, sensory integration clinics, outpatient hospital settings & volunteer work throughout the world.

She has extensive experience in providing evaluations and treatment for children with neurological, sensory integration, and neurodevelopmental differences. She believes in a joyful and meaningful engagement with children throughout their therapy and enjoys collaborating with all members of a child's life to help support a child's independence & success.

OT supports the independence fostered in Montessori learning environments, including meaningful daily activities (hand washing) as well as meeting the developmental benchmarks. Similarly, OT play-based gyms include sensorial activities.

Currently, it has been found that one in six children have a diagnosis with sensory processing disorders, and OT early intervention has been shown to support children in their development.

Beyond the five senses, there are power systems: interoceptive, proprioceptive, and vestibular systems. Children with sensory processing differences may either be seeking out sensory input or are withdrawn from input. OT work can support a child to become "modulated", or in other words, in homeostasis and in a regulated state to be ready to learn. Emotional regulation challenges are often correlated with sensory processing differences. Children may be observed being in constant motion. Examples include: fidgets constantly, springs/wriggles self, toe walks, or is fearful of heights – to name some indicators. For other sensory processing differences, examples include: for interoceptive (auditory/oral) - picky eating; for proprioceptive (feeling) – uncomfortable with tags, etc; and, for vestibular (balance) - acting "clumsy".

The goal of OT intervention to guide children towards *self-regulation*:

To develop one's ability to change one's energy to adapt to various situations throughout the day, which is required (for children *and adults*) to have effective social, emotional and behavioral skills.

Strategies included modeling language (quiet, slow speech) and using physical tools and practices (flexible seating, fidget tools, weighted vests). Modeling, tools and practices work best to prepare the learning environment through process to teach to the child during moments when the child is regulated, but not when the child is dysregulated. Through modeling and practicing the child can develop tools when they need them. It is recommended to practice tools with the whole class with a goal to develop an environment of support for the child or children with self-regulation differences. One example of a practice during a transition time is for the teacher to say to the class: "Everyone's engines are running really fast, let's slow down and give ourselves a hug and get ready to begin the lesson."

Handouts of resources including step-by-step tools were distributed to in-person attendees.

Meeting adjourned by consensus at 5:30pm.

**Next Meeting:**

Friday, March 8, 2024, 6 p.m., The Montessori Event, Orlando