



Minutes

May 21, 2024

The Nurtury Montessori, Larchmont
School Tour at 3:30 p.m.

Meeting at 4:00 p.m.

Meeting called to order at 4:01pm.

Attendees included *in-person*: Diane Lanci, Diane Nickerson, Sheba Kapur, Anna Rita Pergolizzi-Wentworth (NYC Liaison), Brianna Banahan (Westchester Liaison), Denise Brazeau (Long Island Liaison), Kimberly Le Lay (Long Island Liaison), Cathy Billone, Kate Taylor, Brianna Phillips, Nova Roach, Courtney Lally, Karen Kapoor, and Maria Arroyo; *via Zoom*: Kat Walker, Jennifer Fuggini, Loretta Petronzi, and Barbara Altbrandt.

President Diane Lanci welcomed the attendees for a hybrid meeting held at The Nurtury Montessori in Larchmont. Diane L shared that this will be her last board meeting as NYSMA president and that it has been an honor to serve the NYSMA community along with her colleagues. She welcomed the new board members, Anna Rita Pergolizzi-Wentworth (president) and Lianne Pinciotti (vice president) and said that she looks forward to the continuing advocacy work of the NYSMA board. Secretary Diane Nickerson motioned for the approval of the minutes of the January 2024 Group Meeting, Brianna B. seconded the motion, and the minutes were unanimously approved. Treasurer Sadiya Muniruddin submitted the financial report (attached). The current account balance remains at \$13,315.32, and we welcomed two new member schools: Bovina Montessori and Yellow Acorn Montessori.

Kat reported an overview of the year's advocacy work including board member attendance at the MPPI conference, and NYSMA's first attendance at the NYS Religious and Independent School Educators (RISE) Conference. Members are invited to attend this November, held annually in Albany, as an opportunity to come together and to share our voice at a statewide level. An RFP for conference presenters is out and Montessorians have been specifically invited; the deadline is July 15th. NYSMA has established Montessori among the landscape of early childhood regulations at NYAEYC, as well as ongoing

progress in collaborative work with QUALITYstarsNY, encouraging more Montessori early childhood programs to take advantage of the recognition and program and funding support offered by this statewide agency. Diane N is representing NYSMA at the NYSED Commissioner's Advisory Council for PK-12 independent schools, and is sharing information among members about policy updates for Substantial Equivalency and a new initiative for an alternative pathway for the Regents Diploma with criteria provided through performance and portfolio assessments, currently with an RFP open for mentor schools for 6-12 grade programs.

Lisanne has worked this year to establish statewide regional liaisons representing newly designated NYSMA Regions. Regional NYSMA meetings are being encouraged for the coming year. At regional meetings, attendees can participate in the quarterly group meetings virtually and hold school tours in person locally in each region. NYSMA has put out a call for volunteers for the following regions: Metro (NYC), Adirondacks/Saratoga/Mohawk Valley (Utica), Central/1000 Islands (Syracuse), Finger Lakes/Central (Rochester), Southern Tier (Binghamton), and North Country (Plattsburg).

Diane L encourages members to complete the survey to continue to provide input to the board for professional development topics that can be planned for next year's quarterly meetings.

Sheba invited members to follow NYSMA's social media and to send photos and updates so that they can be shared. Diane N shared that meeting information, including minutes and other policy updates can be found on the website.

Presenters: Cathy Billone, Nurtury Owner, and Kate Taylor, Employment Recruiter and Nurtury Parent
Topic: Staff Hiring & Retention

Kate suggests that when initiating the hiring process, first consider clear and concise job postings, and beyond posting with AMS or AMI, consider branded online recruiting sites. ZipRecruiter is recommended, especially for assistants, aftercare, and substitutes. Online posts should be attractive and exciting versus a long list of duties and responsibilities. Research shows that resumes represent a candidate significantly more poorly than interview responses. When interviewing consider asking behavior questions, questions that share descriptions of past experiences. For example, "How have you handled _x_ in the past?"

Once a new employee starts at your school consider intentional onboarding practices that include mentoring, and explicit communications about the school's culture, procedures, and expectations. During the first few days check in with the new employee often, even asking, "What could we do differently?" New employees may be hesitant to ask questions and need guidance to understand why procedures are in place, including nuances of the school's culture. A useful tool may be an orientation video to share many important pieces of information, in addition to the staff handbook and training documents. It is recommended to

have regular check-in meetings throughout a teacher's first year to have time to reflect, know that they are cared about, and support them in areas of need.

It is recommended to be specific during the orientation and reinforce throughout the year the procedures and expectations for: observations, evaluations, and contract renewals.

Cathy shared that OCFS offers a staff retention grant statewide that is predicted to continue for the next few years. OCFS licensors and supervisors in the Capital Region are beginning to see the value in Montessori and are interested in adapting the criteria for Montessori programs. Towards this goal Cathy attended a meeting with Westchester County Executive George Latimer, move forward the consideration of the Montessori credential as an equivalent to an early childhood degree for licensing criteria. NYSMA is working to have the Montessori credential for a teacher with a bachelor's degree to qualify for the OCFS criteria for early childhood certification. NYSMA is currently working to initiate a verification process for schools and centers. The intention is to use this tool to work with OCFS and other state agencies, such as QUALITYstarsNY and Aspire to establish allowances for Montessori schools amid regulations and standards that limit our ability to practice Montessori with integrity. The indirect benefits of a verification process center around bringing a greater understanding of the core Montessori practices to state policymakers and regulators.

Quarterly Group Meetings dates are set for the 2024-2025 school year. The business meetings begin at 4pm, and the speaker presentation is from 4:30-5:30pm. School tours are offered by the hosting school at 3:30pm:

- Oct 21 (Mon)
- Jan 28 (Tue)
- May 15 (Thu)

NYSMA will again host a Meet & Greet get-together at AMS's Montessori Event:

- Mar 14 (Fri) The Montessori Event, 6pm