



# NAMC News

FALL 2009

SHARING INFORMATION AND IDEAS AMONG OUR SCHOOLS, STUDENTS AND GRADUATES



## Message from Dale Gausman, Program Director

A major focus over the past three years has been elementary curriculum development, and we are delighted by the encouraging feedback from students, graduates, and schools about our Lower and Upper Elementary Diploma Program manuals and curriculum support materials. Thank you to our NAMC team for your hard work, passion, and commitment! Further curriculum development continues, and we will keep you informed as new products become available.

Also on our main agenda is the enhancement of internal systems for student services and support functions. As a distance education provider, efficient and effective communication is critical to student success. The transition to new systems for student records and communication is going smoothly, thanks to our experienced and customer-focused team. Another aspect of our communications plan is centered on the internet as an incredible medium for staying in touch with our students, graduates, schools, and Montessori friends. You will see more about this in the article on worldwide connections later in this newsletter.

Schools are an incredible resource for NAMC – their needs, as well as those of our students, are the catalyst for the ongoing improvement of our programs and services. We welcome requests and recommendations, and appreciate your shared experiences as a valuable measurement of our growth and an instrument for positive change.

As I write this message, the theme that prevails is one of collaboration. We would not be where we are today, leading the way in distance Montessori teacher training, without the shared commitment and support of our students, schools, and graduates. They are our compass, and this is the viewpoint from which we look to the future and set our sights for continued improvement and added value to our programs and offerings.

In this issue, we are pleased to put the spotlight on NAMC Lower Elementary graduate Debra Smorto, owner of Fields of Green Montessori in New Jersey. Debra is a longtime Montessorian with a strong commitment to quality education and environmental stewardship. I hope you enjoy Debra's story as much as we do!

From all of us at NAMC, warmest wishes for peace and continued success in 2010!

Dale

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### NAMC ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Debra Smorto - Fields of Green Montessori, NJ

Introducing . . .

**NAMC's  
ELEMENTARY  
MASTERY  
CHECKLISTS**

Special Introductory Price

(see page 2)

# Mastery Checklists for the Montessori Elementary Classroom

In an effort to assist our graduates and schools with their observation and record-keeping efforts, NAMC has just recently completed Mastery Checklists for our elementary programs. These checklists complement the scope of activities contained in the current edition NAMC curriculum manuals for each program:

- Lower Elementary (6–9 years)
- Upper Elementary (9–12 years)

In the Montessori environment, organized record-keeping helps teachers run a program efficiently, meet government reporting requirements, and provide parents with feedback about their children. But most importantly, record-keeping helps teachers facilitate the student's learning.

The NAMC checklists are divided by subject, year, and topic of study. Teachers use the checklists to track the individual progress of each student by recording the dates a student receives, practices, and masters each topic/activity/material. A separate checklist is used for each student and for each curriculum.

By using Mastery Checklists, teachers can clearly see what each student is working on, what he/she has accomplished, and what presentations he/she still needs to receive. As well, the checklists provide an outline of each student's interests based on the activities he/she has chosen to work on. From this pattern, the teacher can determine if students are fully benefitting from the program, or if the teacher needs to support their learning by guiding them toward other areas of the curriculum.

The Mastery Checklists also provide teachers with a summary and assessment of the student's level of development. They can evaluate a student's abilities and growth from the range of activities the student has mastered or is working on. Although students have different interests and abilities, they usually attain certain skills at similar ages. Therefore, up-to-date, detailed checklists also help the teacher see when a student may be having developmental problems. One additional benefit of NAMC's customized checklists is that they present our wide range of curriculums and resources in a graphical, easy-to-use manner that will aid teachers in both curriculum management and integration.

Effective this fall, these lists are included in the NAMC diploma program materials.



*“NAMC’s customized checklists present our wide range of curriculums and resources in a graphical, easy-to-use manner that will aid teachers in both curriculum management and integration.”*

**View Sample Mastery Checklists:**

[www.montessoritraining.net/curriculum\\_materials/mastery\\_checklists.htm](http://www.montessoritraining.net/curriculum_materials/mastery_checklists.htm)

**Special Introductory  
Price**

**\$25.00 USD**

**\$28.00 CAD**

Each set contains  
over 100 pages of  
time-saving checklists.

**Visit our website to  
place your order today!**

Questions about the NAMC Elementary Mastery Checklists can be directed to [classroom@montessoritraining.net](mailto:classroom@montessoritraining.net), or ask for Deneene if you are calling us by telephone.



### *NAMC Mission Statement*

Our mission at NAMC is to deliver high quality Montessori teacher education programs that equip our students with a solid foundation in Montessori philosophy, methods, materials, and interactions needed to create the environment that leads to enriched learning opportunities for every child. We achieve this goal by including comprehensive, innovative lifetime teaching resources with our programs, by engaging our students in productive, active learning, and by effectively supporting each student's success with their educational journey.

### *Our Guiding Principles*

- Our guiding philosophy is one of continuous improvement. NAMC is committed to continually enhancing its programs and resources.
- We embrace Dr. Montessori's belief that childhood education must be progressive. It should provide a keen insight into the Montessori method within the context of contemporary psychology and educational and social wisdom. Blending the Montessori approach with contemporary enrichment has proven to be effective, rewarding, and beneficial to today's child.
- We believe that every individual has lifelong, personal opportunities for learning. To that end, we offer an international training program for persons who desire to enrich the development and learning experience of young children. Teachers, teaching assistants, tutors, parents, and grandparents all enroll in our programs for a variety of professional and personal reasons.
- We build our programs on the human and cultural richness of our international student body. We believe in the principles of promoting acceptance and inclusivity, embracing diversity and challenges, and inspiring human progress toward peace and harmony.

*“And so we discovered that education is not something which the teacher does, but that it is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being.”*

*— Maria Montessori,  
The Absorbent Mind*

# NAMC Worldwide Connections



Since launching the NAMC web blog in 2007, we have also developed a faithful following on our Facebook and Twitter pages. What a great way to stay in touch with students, alumni, and our Montessori friends! It allows us to share news, ideas, and insight on ongoing experiences with fellow Montessorians. As one of our alumni, Sophie Hamilton put it, *"As I've often heard among Montessorians, sharing is caring."*

Thank you for staying connected with us! You'll find interesting information, alumni news, and program updates:

NAMC Blog:

<http://montessoritraining.blogspot.com/>

NAMC Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/North-American-Montessori-Center-NAMC/41053863638>

Twitter:

<http://twitter.com/teachmontessori>

We would like to thank all of those individuals who participated in our 2009 blog contest. Your enthusiasm and interest is greatly admired and appreciated.

Congratulations to our winners! Enjoy reading their submissions from the following link:

<http://montessoritraining.blogspot.com/search/label/Blog%20Contest>

- **David Elkind, Ph.D.:** Play and Work in Montessori Education
- **Namita Jain:** Montessori Cultural Activity: Democratic Elections in India
- **Rachael Partain:** Montessori Zoology Activity for the Early Childhood Classroom

## Graduate Referrals A note of grateful appreciation

**T**here is nothing more important to an organization than a family of happy and satisfied clients. In our case, it is our graduates and partner schools around the globe that make-up this family.

We want to ensure that our extended family of students receive what they need from us in order to succeed in their careers. We understand that student and graduate success is integral to our own success. To that end, the work we do for our students is heavily focused on quality programs and service. However, as distance educators, we rarely have the opportunity to meet our students and schools in person to learn firsthand how we can serve them better. Student feedback, therefore, is a vital resource in our ongoing development of programs and services.

Equally important to us are those kind and generous individuals worldwide who act as graduate references for people who are considering enrolling in our programs. A graduate reference can be the most important part of our communication with these individuals, because it offers a direct contact to someone who can share their NAMC experience, turning it into something real and concrete for those individuals who want some assurance of NAMC's Montessori teacher training services.

NAMC is extremely grateful to all of our graduates who have given their time and support to help us in this very important effort. Your references are meaningful in so many ways; we appreciate the opportunity to stay connected and learn about our alumni's experiences and successes since graduating from NAMC.

In keeping with our commitment to progress, we continue to work toward new and effective ways of maintaining special contact and communication with our alumni and schools. If you have any ideas to share, please let us know:

[namc-news@montessoritraining.net](mailto:namc-news@montessoritraining.net).

To all of our NAMC graduates who have supported us in so many ways, a very heartfelt Thank You!



# AMS Fall 2009 Conference Overview

Michelle Irinyi, NAMC Tutor



Over the weekend of October 16–18th, I had the pleasure of attending the 2009 fall AMS (American Montessori Society) conference in Garden Grove, CA.

The conference theme was Montessori Education: Inquiry, Involvement, & Insight. If you ever have the chance to attend a Montessori conference, I highly recommend it. It provides a special opportunity to meet new people who are all united about the

wonders of Montessori education. Teachers and administrators from schools of all sizes attended the fall conference, including many public school Montessorians. Many attendees were from the West Coast, but there were people from all over the United States, Canada, and abroad.

I had the opportunity to participate in several great workshops presented by leaders in Montessori education. It was wonderful to sit with fellow Montessorians and learn about current trends in Montessori education. Some of the workshops I attended included:

- *Normalization in the Montessori Classroom* presented by Beth Phillips
- *Before Numbers: Laying a Mathematical Foundation* presented by Bee Pape
- *Fostering Oral and Written Language in Children with Learning Differences* presented by Joyce Pickering
- *Classroom Management and Reengaging the Off-Task Child* presented by Jonathan Wolff and Nancy Terry Sager

*"I really appreciated Beth Phillip's message that every movement in the Montessori environment must be taught and modeled. It really made me stop to think about whether I was teaching every fine detail as I should, or was I unjustly assuming my students would get it."*

I came away from the conference feeling refreshed and validated that Montessori education is alive and thriving. I connected with many enthusiastic and dedicated Montessori teachers, including many NAMC graduates and students, who openly shared the many amazing things that are happening in their classrooms and schools. Most importantly, I came away with a greater breadth of knowledge and experience to share with my NAMC students and apply in my blog writing. I look forward to attending my next Montessori conference!

**For more information on these and other workshops from the conference, visit the AMS website where over 100 handouts are available as free downloads.**

<http://www.amshq.org/conference/09gardengrove/program2/handouts.php>



## US and Canadian History Manuals are a hit!



Late last fall, NAMC initiated a campaign to share our newly published, one-of-a-kind Upper Elementary History Manuals with Montessori elementary schools across the US and Canada. Over 550 schools have already received our gift, and we are thrilled to continue with our mission to support the global Montessori community in this small way. It is extremely rewarding to receive feedback that the concepts and ideas from the manuals are being successfully integrated into Montessori classrooms. You have told us that your students are enjoying the activities and are inspired to further explore the concepts in their own ways, following their unique interests.

We warmly invite you to contact us if your school has not received its copy.

*"Thank you again, tons and tons, for the US History album. I gave it to our upper elementary division head, who also teaches history, and he is thrilled with it. Peace."*

**Frank W. Brainard, Head of School  
The Greensboro Montessori School, NC**

*"It is a beautiful, informative album. I personally love it. Our assistant principal said she was going to show it to our upper grade level teachers and let them know it will be placed in our media center for their use. Thank you so much."*

**Linda Rogers  
Cumberland Road Montessori School, NC**

*"My co-teacher and I and our school director were thrilled to receive the US History album. It has beautiful pictures and clear guidelines. Thank you so much."*

**Jean Anastasia, Elem. II Teacher  
Montessori World School, FL**

For more information, contact us at [classroom@montessoritraining.net](mailto:classroom@montessoritraining.net), or by telephone and ask for Jennifer.

# NAMC Alumni Spotlight

Debra Smorto — Owner and Director, Fields of Green Montessori School, Vernon, NJ  
(Toddler to Grade 8 and Growing!)



Debra has been an educator and wildlife rehabilitator since her early childhood years, when she began rescuing and rehabilitating frogs in her local neighborhood. Her lifelong passion for education started with mentoring her younger brother Mike, and has progressed to where she is today — as the owner, director, and head elementary teacher for Fields of Green

Montessori School in Vernon, NJ.

Debra worked toward the dream of owning her own school throughout her adult life and acquired her Montessori 3–6 credential through CMTE in New York. While raising her two children, she first completed a B.S. in Environmental Studies from New York State University, and then her M.Ed. from the Institute for Educational Studies at Endicott College in Massachusetts. Debra then completed her Montessori Lower Elementary (6–9) diploma with NAMC. Through the years, Debra has also continued her commitment to the stewardship of orphaned and injured wildlife.

In 1997, Debra realized her dream and opened Fledglings Montessori School in Vernon. At the time, it offered a Montessori curriculum for early childhood. Since then, the school has grown to offer Montessori programs for toddlers (18 months) to grade 8, and continues its progression toward secondary levels. Some five years ago, Debra moved the expanding school to a new location and changed the name of the school to Fields of Green Montessori. *“The new name better reflects the curriculum offerings, as well as our strong focus on environmental stewardship,”* says Debra.

The driving principles behind Fields of Green Montessori follow the Montessori peace curriculum, providing a values-based learning community that embraces five key elements:

- A Sense of Place • A Sense of Self • A Sense of Value
- A Sense of Inner Motivation • A Sense of Learning

Debra has chosen NAMC to enhance the educational background of her staff, and has acted as a reference on our behalf for other individuals seeking a manageable way to acquire their Montessori teacher training. *“I like your program in particular because of its convenience for many working staff who are also parents of small children, which makes it almost impossible for them to attend classes to achieve their certification.”*

Debra also mentors her own faculty, expanding their learning through her own extensive experience and providing them with opportunities and ideas for enhancing their knowledge through practical observation, additional reading, and of course, hands-on application of the Montessori methodology. In this way, Debra reflects the growing number of Montessori school administrators who support their staff’s continuing education using similar methods.

It is through individuals like Debra that NAMC recognizes tremendous value in continued development of our training programs, with opportunities to support and encourage professional development initiatives in order to enhance our student and alumni’s learning.

For Debra, life does not appear to be slowing down at all. In her own words, *“This curriculum is a work in progress, an evolution that began long before my career of 20 years . . . Knowledge, respect, humility, and wonder are cultivated at all times. These things never need to leave the arena, no matter how old we become.”*

With these four virtues as guiding principles for the collaborative efforts of her school, staff, and parents, Debra continues to create a nurturing environment and opportunities for the young citizens of her community.

[www.fieldsofgreen.org](http://www.fieldsofgreen.org)

*“Fields of Green Montessori School models a Montessori, Earth-based curriculum wherein each child individually and actively participates in his or her development as an intelligent, creative, unique, and integral part of the environment in which we all live and share.”*



*Debra lives in Glen Spey, New York with her 4 dogs, many cats, 2 rabbits, and a ferret, and her wild friends surround them in their forest retreat. If she ever has spare time, she loves to hike, garden, write, and read.*