

The Case for the Montessori Institute of North Texas (MINT)

“Within the child lies the fate of the future.”

-- Dr. Maria Montessori

The Montessori Institute of North Texas (MINT) (formerly MTRCD) is conducting Montessori teacher training certification courses in Dallas at three levels:

- Elementary (1st through 6th grades)
- Primary (preschool and kindergarten age)
- Toddler (birth to 3 years)

A Unique Mission . . .

MINT’s mission is to provide Montessori teacher training and certification at the highest level, and to engage in valuable research beneficial to the Montessori community. Our board has included representatives of well-established Dallas Montessori schools, including:

Barbara Gordon Montessori School
The Clariden School
East Dallas Community School
Lindsley Park Community School
Montessori Children’s House and School
St. Alcuin Montessori School

To Meet A Unique Need . . .

We came together to meet a critical need for our children – to provide qualified Montessori teachers certified by the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI), the international branch of Montessori which sets standards for Montessori schools all over the world.

Montessori Works!

From 40 years of Montessori experience in Dallas, we know that a Montessori education in the early years is an excellent preparation for a fully developed and responsible adolescent and adult. We have proved without a doubt that all children, regardless of ethnicity or income level, can succeed in school when given a strong foundation during their first years of life.

Here’s an example –

- One of our partner schools serves an ethnically and culturally diverse group of primarily low income children in deep East Dallas, where the high school graduation rate is less than 50%. A follow-up study of

children who attended this Montessori school through the third grade found that 97% had graduated from high school or obtained a GED, and 88% of those had gone on to college!

And this is not an isolated case!

- A recent longitudinal study of Milwaukee high school graduates showed that students who had attended Montessori preschool and elementary programs significantly outperformed a peer control group on math/science scores. “In essence,” the study found, “attending a Montessori program from the approximate ages of three to eleven predicts significantly higher mathematics and science standardized test scores in high school.”
 - Kathryn Rindskopf Dohrmann, Ph.D., MPH, “Outcomes for Students in a Montessori Program: A Longitudinal Study of the Experience in the Milwaukee Public Schools” (AMI/USA May, 2003).
- Another study found significantly higher student motivation and socialization among adolescents in Montessori programs compared to traditional school environments. “There were strong differences suggesting that Montessori students were feeling more active, strong, excited, happy, relaxed, sociable, and proud while engaged in academic work. They were also enjoying themselves more, they were more interested in what they were doing, and they wanted to be doing academic work more than the traditional students.”
 - Kevin Rathunde, Ph.D., “A Comparison of Montessori and Traditional Middle Schools: Motivation, Quality of Experience, and Social Context,” *The NAMTA Journal* 28.3 (Summer 2003): pp. 12-52.
- A recent comparison of Montessori students with students in other school programs found that 5-year-old Montessori students scored higher on both academic and behavioral tests than the control group. The study also found that 12-year-old Montessori students wrote more sophisticated and creative stories and showed a more highly developed sense of community and social skills than students in other programs.
 - Angeline Lillard, Ph.D., “Evaluating Montessori Education,” *Science* 131:1893-94 (Sept. 29, 2006)

Sharing the Success . . .

With this established record of success, why can't more Montessori schools serve more children and families in Dallas? One important reason is the severe shortage of highly trained and qualified teachers.

As an example, last year only 92 new elementary teachers graduated from AMI training courses nationwide, and only 28 new toddler teachers were certified! When one of our partner schools conducted a search for an AMI-certified preschool teacher, only a few qualified applicants responded. Of those who responded, none lived in Dallas, and all but two lived outside the United States and did not have authorization to work in this country. The same school found no qualified applicants to accept a position as a toddler teacher, and had to seek legal authorization for a teacher from another country to work here in Dallas.

What makes it so hard to find these qualified teachers for our children? For years teachers who wanted to obtain AMI teacher certification have had to travel to other cities, and even to other countries, to study. As a result, hundreds of excellent teachers and potential teachers in our city have had to move away from Dallas to take this training – or give up the dream of becoming a Montessori teacher altogether.

The Solution Begins at the Source . . .

That's why we decided to address this problem at its source, by making AMI teacher training and certification available here, in Dallas, Texas.

After intensive work and preparation, MINT obtained approval from AMI to train teachers at the elementary, primary, and toddler levels, and Dallas is now the only city in the Western Hemisphere that can offer this training at all three levels.

Our plan is well underway and our dream has become a reality!

- **The Elementary Training Course** (1st through 6th grades) completed its first cycle in August 2006. A class of 15 elementary teacher trainees successfully completed the three-year course. The opening of the second cycle Elementary course is planned for summer 2008.
- **The Primary Training Course** (preschool and kindergarten age) completed its first cycle in August 2007, awarding the Primary diploma to 33 new teachers. The opening of the second cycle Primary course is planned for summer 2008.
- **The Toddler Training Course** (birth to 3 years) completed its first cycle in August 2006, awarding diplomas to 11 qualified teachers. These toddler teachers and early childhood specialists are equipped to offer the best educational opportunities to children and parents when it matters most – during the critical first years of life when the developing brain creates the template for emotional security, language development, and optimal learning throughout life. Our second Toddler Course began in June 2007, and a class of 23 students successfully completed the first summer's work.

Resources Required . . .

Start-up costs for MINT's Teacher Training Courses offer many opportunities for our funding partners to provide essential support, including:

- Specialized training materials for each model classroom, consisting of the Montessori materials necessary for each of the three Teacher Training Courses. These special manipulatives are used to teach (1) practical life skills, necessary for fine motor development and the child's increasing focus, concentration and sense of independence; (2) sensory-motor education and cognitive skills development; (3) language arts; (4) mathematics; and (5) cultural areas such as botany, geography, and history. The teacher trainees will use these materials daily during their training for demonstration and practice. Also needed are child-size shelves, tables, and chairs for each model classrooms:

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| Elementary training materials: | \$26,000 |
| Primary training materials: | 26,000 |
| Toddler training materials: | 10,000 |
| Model classroom furniture: | 5,000 |

- Office equipment and audio-visual equipment for use by the Directors of Training and visiting lecturers, tables and chairs for the lecture rooms, and furniture for the student lounge: \$13,000

- MINT plans to establish a Scholarship Fund to assist students who need financial assistance to take the AMI Teacher Training Courses. Fifty percent of all donations designated for the Scholarship Fund (or the specific amount indicated by the donor) will be allocated to a permanent scholarship endowment, to make sure that the opportunity to obtain Montessori teacher training and certification can be shared with qualified student applicants who would not otherwise be able to obtain this training.

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| Scholarship Fund: | \$100,000 |
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Our Community Recognizes the Need and Supports the Solution . . .

There could be no greater confirmation of the need for MINT's Teacher Training Courses than the groundswell of support that has arisen from schools and individuals throughout the Dallas-Fort Worth area and beyond. Thanks to the generous support of those who know the need first-hand, MINT's fundraising efforts are already well underway. For example:

- During the first cycle of courses, MINT secured donations of over \$100,000 from individuals, schools, organizations, and foundations.

- Donors include teachers, administrators, schools, school board members, parents, friends, and local foundations including The Anthony Family

Foundation, The Harold Simmons Foundation, The Hillcrest Foundation, The Lightner Sams Foundation, The Rachofsky Foundation, and The George and Fay Young Foundation.

- Our partner schools donated teaching space, utilities, and janitorial services for the first cycle of courses, and several of the schools loaned needed materials, including the training materials, furniture, office equipment, and audio-visual equipment, to begin the courses.

Working Together to Make a Difference . . .

MINT's Teacher Training Courses will make a significant contribution to early childhood education in Dallas. The availability of highly trained, certified Montessori teachers will enable us to continue to provide the highest quality education for children in existing schools. It will permit the opening of more classrooms and schools, making this opportunity available to more children and families in our city and throughout the Southwest.

As an international training center, MINT has attracted students from all over the United States and from 19 foreign countries including Belgium, China, Guatemala, India, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Togo, and Uganda. The majority of our graduates, however, are teaching in Texas schools, including:

Barbara Gordon Montessori School, Colleyville TX
Cedar Park Montessori School, Cedar Park TX
The Clariden School, Roanoke TX
Colleyville Montessori School, Colleyville TX
Community Montessori School, Georgetown TX
Good Shepherd Montessori School, McKinney TX
East Dallas Community School, Dallas TX
Lakewood Montessori School, Dallas TX
Lindsley Park Community School, Dallas TX
Montessori Children's House and School, Dallas TX
Montessori Earth School, San Antonio TX
Montessori of Las Colinas, Las Colinas TX
New Star Montessori School, Plano TX
Pflugerville Montessori School, Pflugerville TX
The Post Oak School, Houston TX
St. Alcuin Montessori School, Dallas TX
St. James' Episcopal School, Austin TX
Starwood Montessori School, Frisco TX
Sunrise Montessori School, Round Rock TX
Westside Montessori School, Houston, TX

This is the opportunity and the challenge before us. Generous support of MINT will make it possible for more children and families in our community to experience the benefits and results of the Montessori approach to early childhood and education.