

The Montessori Messenger

Spring 2004



June 2004

Farewell Note from Keith Alpaugh, M.Ed.

With a mixture of sadness and excitement, I will be taking leave of the California Montessori Project at the end of this school year. I am moving to Panama. I am very proud of the accomplishments we have all made over the last three school years. I am delighted to introduce you to the incoming Executive Director, Gary Bowman. Gary has many years experience in both the public and charter school world. He has both a California Teaching and an Administrative Credential. Gary comes to CMP from the Camptonville School District with many years of experience in alternative education programs. I am confident that Gary's extensive expertise will greatly benefit California Montessori Project as we continue to implement our mission of providing a quality tuition-free Montessori education to the children of California.

Together, parents and teachers have jointly created a nurturing and innovative academic Montessori environment for children at CMP. In the last month we underwent the MSAC accreditation process and through this self study we were able to see how much we have grown and improved our facilities and our instruction. They will provide us with written feedback on areas where we can continue to improve. We should have the final approval in Fall of 2004.

As this school year comes to an end, it seems like a good time to reflect on the past year.

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- Letter from Governing Board Chairperson Val Toppenberg
- Spring 2004 Updates

CMP Board of Directors

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Jayna Gaskell	Charter Representative
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CMP Executive Director

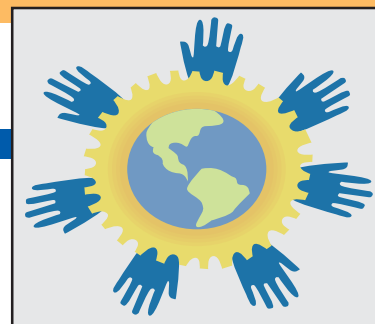
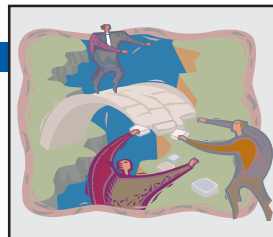
Gary Bowman, M. Ed.
gbowman@cacmp.org
(916)971-2432

CMP Campus Principals

American River	Kim Aldridge
Capitol Campus	Shellie Wright MacColl
Carmichael	Deanna Gardner
Elk Grove	Bernie Evangelista

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We have come a long way. Attending the middle school graduation and acknowledging the growth of students, teachers, and the overall program, was very inspiring. The teachers Trish, Kelly, Cherie and Steve have each laid the foundation for all future middle school students and middle school teachers at CMP. We have 936 students enrolled and over seven hundred on the waiting list. This speaks very highly of our teachers because as we do very little advertising – it is a result of word of mouth.

We want to thank each of you for the time and energy you contributed in responding to our parent surveys. Once again, we have put all of the results into a spreadsheet and they are being presented to the principals and administration for improvement plans. Your feedback is what helps us to continually improve what we offer to children, families and teachers. Thank you.

In the fall, the American River Campus will be located in new facilities. These were provided to CMP by the San Juan School District in response to Proposition 39. Deanna Gardner will be the principal at the American River Campus and there will be 288 students enrolled. Kim Aldridge will be the principal at the Carmichael campus with a current population of 230 students.

Shingle Springs and American River expanded their student population to full capacity for their locations.

With the addition of the larger AR campus we have hired new teachers and have been very fortunate to attract highly qualified Montessori and California credentialed teachers. 90% of our current staff will end this school year with both their Montessori certification and their California Teaching Credential.

Next year families can look forward to much improved Parent Education Classes. These courses will include Montessori 101- finding out about Montessori and charter school and the materials your children will be working with, Montessori 102 – teachers will share with families what their children are working on in the classroom, and Montessori 103 – children will teach their families what they have learnt with the Montessori materials. We will also bring in outside child development experts --look for this information in your weekly campus newsletter. We will also include a socialization hour for parents to get to know one another.

Thank you all for your dedication and commitment to children and for creating an excellent learning environment. Thank you for all your support and encouragement over the years. I believe that CMP under the leadership of Gary will move to the next level of development and obtain a State Board Charter so more Montessori Charter school will flourish in California.

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Letter from Governing Board Chairperson Val Toppenberg



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Debra Pearson Superintendent
Val Toppenberg Business
Angie Wiggins CMP Parent

Executive Director

H. Keith Alpaugh, M.Ed.

June 11, 2004

Dear CMP Parents, Faculty and Friends:

Your California Montessori Project governing board is pleased to announce the appointment of Gary Bowman as CMP Superintendent / Executive Director. Gary comes to CMP from the Camptonville School District in the Sierra foothills. He has a long history in education including experience as a teacher, principal and superintendent, as well as experience in overseeing charter schools. Gary comes well recommended by those with whom he has worked in the past. As part of the Superintendent selection process the board conducted an extensive search, reaching out to traditional, charter and Montessori communities and receiving applications from as far away as Virginia. After reviewing scores of applications and interviewing numerous candidates with the assistance of an advisory interview committee made up of parents, teachers and principals, the board unanimously selected Gary Bowman. We share confidence that Gary is the right person to lead CMP as the school begins its fourth year of serving our children.

CMP is in solid financial and operational condition and delivers a quality Montessori education to more than 900 elementary and middle school students on five campuses. We have a strong group of dedicated teachers who are committed to CMP's mission of providing a tuition-free Montessori education to the children of California. As we continue to implement our mission we must also prepare for the renewal of our charter in two years. Gary Bowman will provide the critical focused leadership required throughout the charter renewal process.

Executive Director Keith Alpaugh has served our school well for the past three years and the board wishes to take this opportunity to thank Keith for his extraordinary commitment and service to CMP. Keith is one of CMP's four founders and has been instrumental in the creation of CMP. He has worked countless hours over the last four years and has made a tremendous difference in the direction of the school. If you see Keith on one of his many visits to our schools over the next couple of weeks, please thank him for his service.

Please feel free to ask questions of your principal or any of the CMP Board members should the occasion arise.

Sincerely,

Val

Val Toppenberg
Governing Board Chairperson

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California Montessori Project Dress Attire/Dress Code

Montessori education is concerned with the inner development of the child's mental, emotional, physical and spiritual being. As such, we seek to limit undue focus of attention on external appearances. After much discussion about the relative values of uniforms and individual freedom, CMP adopted a dress code policy.

*****Please see pages 57-59 in your California Montessori Project Family/School Handbook for specific dress attire/dress code guidelines*****

Uniforms and Tee Shirts

If you enjoy purchasing items for the family on line, we have great news for you! We have created an account with the companies Land End & French Toast. These companies will take your order over the phone or on line. They are available to make suggestions about attire as they have our regulations available for quick review. Also, you may order any clothing with our logo included -- stop by your local campus office for more information on this service. This program supports the development of a clothing fund used for families who demonstrate a high need for financial support for acquiring the uniform needed.

Important Dates

June 25th, 2004

Last Day of School Year 2003-2004

June 28th, 2004

Summer Intersession begins at Elk Grove, Carmichael, and Shingle Springs (preregistration is required)

July 5th, 2004

Independence Day Holiday

Club Montessori Closed

August 13th, 2004

Last Day of Summer Intersession

August 19th, 2004

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PARENT PARTICIPATION:

Thank you to all parents for completing their parent participation hours. Research indicates that children whose parents are involved in their schooling have significantly higher success rates. Your support of the school is invaluable and at the same time gives your children the message that you value their education. Families have logged thousands of hours. In addition to supporting your child and the school directly by participating, we are also able to include these parent participation hours in grant proposals as it demonstrates parent contribution. *For this reason, even when you have completed your hours, please continue to track your volunteer hours.*

A very big thank you to all the room parents who have made so many field trips possible and helped the teachers with the many events that they put on each year. **Remember:** You may use your attendance at Montessori 101, 102 and 103 towards your parent participation hours. If both parents attend you get double parent participation hours while you learn about your children's daily experience and get to meet the parents of the children in the class.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM: Assessment of CMP curriculum and instructional program:

We have very exciting news!!! In our last newsletter we let you know that our Instruction and Curricula Development Team (eight Mentor teachers and Norman Lorenz) were working on developing a curricula flow chart for each of the

groupings: 3rd-6th grade, 6th-9th grade, 9th-12th grade, and Middle School for Language, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science. They have completed all flow charts covering all subjects!!!

These flow charts will be presented at the closing professional development day on the 29th of June to the entire faculty and they will be provided to all teachers to ensure that the scope and sequence of Montessori instruction and the California State Standards are covered throughout the campuses. When school resumes, please ask your children's teachers if you are interested in viewing these charts.

COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS - MONTESSORI 101, 102 AND 103:

Before the new 2004 -2005 school year begins, our volunteer technology team of parents will be putting up our new web page which is about two thirds complete at this time. There will be links for each campus as another way for families to keep updated. We will continue to send out the weekly newsletter. Thank you for all the good feedback we received on these weekly newsletters.

MIDDLE SCHOOL:

Graduation of our Middle School students was a very inspiring event and well-attended. The students have racked up many experiences in the outdoors, colleges, working in real occupation environments, and experiencing city life. In addition they scored exceptionally high on the State annual testing and on the high school testing – which they voluntarily underwent. Class structure is based on collaborative learning and research based projects. Technology based multimedia is integrated throughout this type of learning.

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This guides each student to develop their own abilities to become highly effective, independent young adults. These skills were very apparent from their presentations at the graduation.

FOR NEW FAMILIES ENTERING THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Middle School classes are taught in cycles of 6 weeks durations. Each cycle emphasizes a specific part of the curriculum. During the last week of each cycle, the students participate in “immersion week” in which they spend time away from the school doing applicable hands-on learning in the real world.

In addition to acquiring core academic information, Montessori Middle school students extend their grasp and stock of abstract interpretive concepts. Our students use a form of Socratic discussion to learn to interpret core data in terms of the social and environmental issues of the world, past and present.

API / AYP / NCLB / CST / STAR / Etc.–

API = Academic Performance Index

AYP = Annual Yearly Progress

NCLB = No Child Left Behind

CST = California Standards Test

STAR = Standardized Testing and Reporting

By request, we are reviewing this information on testing: a flurry of new legislation in recent years on both the state and federal levels has enacted numerous new accountability standards for public schools. While these measurements present a very narrow picture of what children are actually

learning, they are an objective standard to measure and compare progress in the more basic levels of learning (knowledge, comprehension and some application). The more advanced levels of cognitive development (analysis, synthesis and evaluation) are more challenging to evaluate and are usually excluded from these types of assessments.

The California Montessori Project has exceeded the API goals set by the State (by a significant margin!) and continues to demonstrate solid progress in refining and aligning its curriculum. We are proud of our progress as measured by these “traditional” assessments. We believe that the areas of greatest gain are more difficult to measure, but will be seen over a lifetime. Montessori students continue to demonstrate significantly higher levels of learning in the more advanced levels of cognitive and social development – self direction, independence, reflection, lifelong learners, collaborative, interpersonal communications, innovative/creative problem solvers, etc. If you have any questions about your child’s progress, or care to know more about any of these assessments or standards, the principal at your campus should be able to supply you with more detailed information.

During the summer the results from this school year’s State testing will be made available by mail as soon as we receive it. At the beginning of the new school year, Albanesi pretesting will be undertaken for all students so teachers know where to place them on their individual learning plans.

FACULTY:

New teachers will be added at a few of our campuses this upcoming school year. We have been very fortunate to hire qualified Montessori teachers and some new California Credentialed teachers who will begin their

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Montessori Training this July for a month prior to school opening. Our Montessori teachers obtain their training from the numerous teacher training centers in the State. Some obtain their training from The Montessori Teachers Training Center in Sacramento. This training program takes thirteen months and includes all of July on either side of the school year. During the year, the teachers meet monthly to continue their learning. The California credentialed teachers are placed in a classroom with a Montessori mentor teacher. One of our goals is to have a faculty of fully trained teachers with both their California Teaching credential and their Montessori credential.

We will resume our faculty newsletter with the new school year. This will provide the faculty with all the necessary information regarding changes, updates, curriculum and instruction. A teacher feature covering teachers from each campus will be included. Our goal is to foster a stronger sense of community in addition to even higher levels of professionalism!

ACCREDITING

As Keith said in his letter, we have completed the major portion of the accrediting process with MSAC and are working on the WASC accreditation at this time. We will keep you updated on this process.

FACILITIES:

Our American River campus is moving to Sunrise and Oak. It will still be called the American River campus. For the time being, campus questions can be directed to our existing site phone number

at (916) 989-0141. American River Campus will house 288 students when school reopens.

Thank you for the feedback on some of the needs you saw on our facilities. In particular, we wholly agree with the feedback regarding the bathrooms at the Elk Grove campus. Every since we moved into this facility, we have diligently communicated with the landlords to have the bathrooms completely remodeled. They have agreed to this and ran into some financial and building limitations. It appears these have been resolved. We have a meeting set up to ensure this remodel occurs as soon as possible.

FINANCE REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

We have completed our third year and are financially solid. We will now be focusing on raising funds for enrichment programs at all campuses. Each year, California Montessori Project has a thorough audit conducted by an independent CPA firm familiar with public school auditing process. The 2003/2004 audit will begin this summer and will be completed by the December 15th legislated deadline. A copy of the completed audit will be available on our web site after it is approved by our Governing Board in January.

FUNDRAISING:

Private Montessori elementary education costs from \$5,000 to \$12,000 per year for each child. We are all fortunate, that through the vehicle of charter schools, this education can be made available tuition free. We want to provide the very best learning environment for your child. Sometime families wonder why schools have to do fundraising. There are two main reasons for this. One is

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the cost of providing a quality learning environment that exceeds the funds that are provided to the schools. At California Montessori Project, we are providing two teachers (and in some classes a teacher's assistant as well) to nearly every class. Our school is proud to have a teacher to student ratio of between 1:15 to 1:20. Traditional public schools usually have a 1:20 ratio in K – 3rd grade class size reduction classes and a 1:30 -32 ratio from 4th grade up. California Montessori Project also has a very small administrative staff to keep costs down.

The second factor that affects our schools is facilities. Traditional public school facilities are provided through bonds, however, charters schools are not *yet* included in this – and I say “yet”, because efforts are being made to make this more equitable in the future.

Script is an easy way to support your school. Cards that you can swipe at the supermarkets and other stores have been developed. Use of these cards results in California Montessori Project being given a percentage of the sale. You can use it every time you shop. It is so simple and it feels good to know that it is supporting the students at CMP.

Another way you can help California Montessori Project is assistance in identifying and/or introducing us to businesses or private foundations that have an interest in education. Please feel free to contact me with any suggestions or referrals at mmacgillivray@cacmp.org.

Your company may be a potential funder. Some companies have foundations which support nonprofit organizations. Some companies have matching gift programs which allow you to make a donation to the school that is matched by your company. If so, please let me know when you make a donation to California Montessori Project and please enclose your employer's matching gift form with your donation. Thank you to the families who have already donated personally and then had their company match the gift. This resulted in brand new computers and sizable donations towards the playgrounds.

Also, we want to give a very big thank you to all families who have donated toward providing enrichment in all forms, for the students at California Montessori Project. We look forward to working together with you in 2004.

California Montessori Mission Statement

"The mission of the California Montessori Project (CMP) is to provide a quality, tuition-free, Montessori-based educational program to every child in the state of California."

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Charter Schools + Montessori Philosophy = Quality Education!

The Montessori Messenger is a publication of CMP. The main section of the newsletter comes from the CMP administration and provides information that will be of interest to all CMP parents and staff, i.e., Montessori philosophy, policies and procedures, school wide events, charter school issues, etc. The insert portion of the Montessori Messenger will be specific to each school site, i.e., teacher reports, student work examples, sites specific events and issues, etc. We will be experimenting with the layout and content over the coming few months, so feel free to offer constructive comments and suggestions. You can direct these to us via email at info@cacmp.org or make notes on your copy and return it to your site director.



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