

*Inspiring a Healthy Spirit, a Strong Character, and a Clear Intellect*



# BLUEBIRD BULLETIN

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### Get set for the new year: Join us for Back-to-School Night and Orientations



## Welcome Back!

by MAURA JOYCE, HEAD OF SCHOOL

*The needs of humankind are universal. Our means of meeting them create the richness and diversity of the planet.—Maria Montessori*

Back to School Night will be held Thursday, September 8, at 5:15 PM and is designed to help you get acquainted with this year's staff and program changes.

Bring a blanket or chairs to sit on; Parents and Teachers of Montessori (PTM) will provide snacks and drinks. When you arrive, be sure to check in and get your name tag.

The night will start with an informal gathering on the playground behind the main building (enter through Jean and Maryhelen's classroom). You'll have an opportunity to mingle with old friends and meet new ones as

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It is wonderful to have the children back in school and to see new and returning faces around campus!

August marks the beginning of the 36th school year at Montessori in Redlands. With 315 students arriving each morning, we are off to a busy start. During our first week, the staff and students celebrated what would have been Maria Montessori's 141st birthday by employing all the chil-

dren's hands to "move the earth around the sun" out on the soccer field. What a way to honor such a champion for children.

This spring we welcome back a visiting team from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). The 2011-12 school year marks the end of our second 6-year accreditation from WASC. This year is our *Focus on Learning* year, in

*(Continued on page 4)*

**PLEASE NOTE: School will close at 5 PM on Thursday for Back-to-School Night. Childcare is not offered after 5 PM that day.**



Primary students (background) help move the earth around the "sun" (foreground).

# PARENT-TO-PARENT

**By Vanessa Leslie, PTM President**

Welcome back to all of our MIR families! And a very special welcome to our new students and their families!

The Parents and Teachers of Montessori (PTM) support parents and teachers and keep the MIR community informed of and involved in school events. Your 2011-2012 PTM Board is:

- Vanessa Leslie, President
- Kathleen Liess, Vice President
- Vanessa Causley, Secretary
- Heather Florida, Treasurer
- Jean Bonner-Drinkwine, Teacher Liaison

PTM functions like the PTA at other schools. We are dedicated to building a stronger school community, fostering communication, and promoting parental involvement. PTM also sponsors parent education events to promote awareness of Montessori practice and philosophy, parenting, and other topics.

PTM meets monthly to create a network of parent support, organize our activities, and plan events. **All parents are welcome and encouraged to attend meetings.**

## We Need You: Be a Room Representative

Meet other parents and get involved with your child’s class—become a PTM room representative! Room reps act as liaisons between MIR and class parents. Responsibilities include attending monthly meetings, helping organize and run PTM and school events, and communicating important information back to class parents.

We need two “room reps” for each class. **Thank you to those who have already nominated themselves for this important role.** We are still seeking interest as some of the classrooms do not have representatives. Notify your child’s teacher if you are interested.

A Room Rep Orientation will be held on Thursday, September 22 at 6 PM. New Room Reps will receive an invitation in their parent folders with details. Contact Vanessa Leslie at 909-478-4396 with questions.



## A little bird told me...PTM News and Notes



### MIR Bluebirds Flock Together in the Caribbean

MIR students James [not pictured] and Morgan Stewart, Sydney and Leila Agrawal, and Roger and Ryder Imbriani and their families took a southern Caribbean vacation together last Spring Break. The students proudly display their MIR shirts in front of the La Soufriere volcano in St. Lucia.

The MIR mascot is the bluebird, and parents are encouraged to snap interesting pictures of their children wearing their MIR Bluebird or field trip shirts and submit them for publication in the *Bluebird Bulletin*. Email photos to Lisa Kensok at [lisa.kensok@montessoriinredlands.org](mailto:lisa.kensok@montessoriinredlands.org) or drop them off in the office.

Bluebird t-shirts can be purchased during childcare hours in Jean and Maryhelen’s class for \$12 (check only). They are offered in black and pink and come in a range of sizes.

### Bring in Your BoxTops

PTM collects BoxTops for Education each of which is worth 10¢ to the school. You can find these little pink coupons on General Mills cereals, Betty Crocker, Pillsbury, and lots of other products including Huggies, Kleenex, Cottonelle, Ziploc, Saran Wrap, and Viva. Help PTM raise funds for MIR by saving these coupons and placing them in the designated Box-Top collection box in each class. This money is completely free and only requires

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# Report from the Board

by PAMELA FORD, PRESIDENT

## *MIR and The Grove School members tell their stories of Montessori*

In a simple gathering last week, members of the boards of directors of both Montessori in Redlands and The Grove School (which includes the Farm Middle School) shared with each other their stories about how they came to be participants in Montessori education, as parents, as teachers, as community board members, and some as heads of school. The stories are diverse and fascinating.

Margie Armantrout, Grove board member, and her husband Leon shared their story about wanting a Montessori school for their children here in Redlands, which inspired the founding of MIR. Their grandchildren are now enrolled. Ramani Nambisan, MIR board secretary, was a Montessori student in India starting at 18 months and for her it was simply logical that she would enroll her 18-month old daughter in a Montessori school. Vanessa Leslie, president of Parents and Teachers of MIR (PTM), had heard MIR staff member Sandy Bachar's stories of the school even before she had children of her own. When she had children of the right age, she enrolled them at MIR.

Cheri and Robert Dawes learned of MIR's excellent reputation while living in Germany and were happy to join the Grove and MIR boards, respectively, when invited. Cheri later became the first school secretary for the fledgling Grove School.

The Grove School and Farm Middle School were themselves the vision of several individuals: Margie Armantrout and Gena Engelfried were and are especially creative in building a center for adolescent learning. Margie recognized the "inner teacher" in farmer Mamie Powell (Farm science teacher and Farm representative to the Grove board) and asked her to join the Grove community. MIR head of school Maura Joyce's serendipitous story about finding MIR involves a local chef and a cancelled Montessori training in Mexico City.

*(Continued on page 4)*



# Curriculum Matters

By PETER DAVIDSON,

## So Much More than Dusting a Table

Each summer I host a parent event called "Montessori 101" for parents of children new to MIR. It is an introduction to some basic Montessori principles including a discussion of ways to implement those principles at home in preparation for the child starting school.

I give a demonstration, what we in Montessori call a "lesson," on one of the first and simplest of the Montessori activities—"dusting a table." It is one of the simplest activities and yet, if you count them, involves quite a number of sequential steps. We give careful consideration before a lesson, analyzing the skill into its component movements so that our demonstration gives the child a clear impression of the sequence and purpose and creates optimal conditions for success. Let me describe a lesson in dusting a table for you, as I would present it to a child at school.

First, I would invite him to the lesson, and show him where the basket of dust cloths is kept in the classroom. In this way he'll know where to find it when he wants to choose this activity on his own. Next, we'll look around for a dusty table. I will move the chair out of the way and unfold the dust cloth, laying it out flat on the table. I place my right hand, palm side up, on the unfolded cloth and fold each of the three visible corners into my palm, one at a time, capturing each under my thumb. I will raise my hand and show the child what a nifty dusting mitt I have now



Peter demonstrating the folding of the cloth to a parent. The cloth is sized to fit a small child's hand.

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## BOARD REPORT *(cont.)*

*(Continued from page 3)*

There are more wonderful stories. Leela MadhavaRau (MIR's board president for 6 years, now PAC rep to the Grove board), Ed Murphy (6 years on the MIR board, now on the Grove board), and Trevor Norton (MIR board member and chair of the Facilities Committee) all describe their desire for the right place for their own children. Stephen Gervais (president of the Grove board) tells us that it was his son who was able to indicate that MIR was right for him from the beginning! From a different perspective, Andrew Christopherson (faculty member at Grove and high school rep to the Grove board) describes the search for the right place to be a teacher and finding it at Grove.

This small sample of the individual reasons MIR and Grove board members are committed to Montessori education provides a hint about the make up of our local Montessori community: very diverse, very interesting, and very committed. When you meet other board members from both schools, when you meet the staff, and when you meet other parents, ask them to tell you their stories. The sharing of stories increases our sense of community and increases our understanding of the breadth and scope and value of Montessori education.

Here's to a great new school year with committed Montessorians and to the children and adolescents who give us our purpose!

### **Join Us for the First Open Forum of the Year**

The Board invites all parents to attend the board Open Forums, the first of which will take place on Monday, September 26 at 6:30 PM in the Yoga Room. This is your opportunity to ask us questions about policy matters, provide feedback on the school, or ask questions about becoming a Board member.

## WELCOME BACK *(cont.)*

*(Continued from page 1)*

which we conduct a thorough self-study of our programs and the progress our students have been making. Our work is authenticated by the participation of all members of our community—students, staff, parents, administration, and board.

There are several ways in which parents can help us prepare for our WASC visit:

**Join a focus group**—The first organizational meeting will be held Tuesday, September 13 at 6 PM in the main building.

### **Sign Up for After-School Soccer Clinics**

Liam Muirhead, a professional player and coach with English Premier Soccer Camps, will be holding two weekly, one-hour soccer clinics after school at MIR.

The first clinic, for ages 6–8, will be held Mondays, 3:30–4:30 PM, from September 12 to October 3. The second clinic, for ages 9 and older, will be held Wednesdays, 3:30–4:30 PM, from September 14 to October 5.

Fees for the clinics are \$45, and students will receive a t-shirt. Sign up in the MIR office.

### **Organization Offers French & Mandarin at MIR**

Lango, an organization dedicated to the early learning of foreign languages, is offering French and Mandarin classes

Focus groups will meet four times this fall and submit a report of their findings by January for the document we will send to WASC.

**Join a study group**—Volunteer a day or two to conduct interviews or to observe in a classroom. As we gather information for our self-study, parents can help collect data.

You can email me at [maura.joyce@montessoriinredlands.org](mailto:maura.joyce@montessoriinredlands.org) or fill out one of the blue WASC forms at Back to School Night if you are interested in working on WASC.

after school at MIR starting Tuesday, September 6. Classes are offered separately from the MIR school day and require separate registration. They are held in the Yoga room on Tuesdays and Thursdays at the following times:

- French (ages 3–8): 3:30–4:15 p.m.
- Chinese (ages 4–9): 4:30–5:15 p.m.

All classes last 10 weeks, for a total of 20 classes. The cost is \$259 per child, plus \$50 yearly fee for materials (work-books, CDs, flashcards). Enroll online at [www.langoredlands.com](http://www.langoredlands.com) or call 909-528-3154.

Students who normally end their school day at 3:00 PM or 3:30 PM must be signed out from their MIR class and taken to the Lango class by a parent. Students whose day ends at 5:00 PM will be picked up for class by the Lango teacher.

## CURRICULUM MATTERS *(cont.)*

created, fitted to my hand. (I've already demonstrated 8 steps, and I'm only now ready to begin to dust the table!)

Using my left hand to keep the table steady, I begin a left-to-right dusting motion starting at the far left corner of the table. I proceed with left-to-right sweeps of the cloth, each time starting a little closer to the near side of the table. At some point I will lift my hand and hold it in front of the child's eyes and call his attention to the accumulating dust: "Oh, my. Look at how much dust I have already picked up!" This change in the cloth as well as the change in the surface of the table seem to call out to the child, engaging his interest and focusing his attention. I continue in this way, working from left to right and from top to bottom until the entire tabletop has been dusted.

Now, I can place the chair back under the table, take my dust cloth to the trash can and give it a shake, and then place it in the dirty laundry basket to await scrubbing by some other industrious student later in the morning. (My tally at this point comes in somewhere between 15 and 20 steps, just for this one simple activity!)



"So, what's the big deal?" you might ask. Well, it is a big deal to the 2-, 3-, or 4-year-old to whom I give the lesson. He is in what we think of as a *sensitive period for refinement of movement*, when he is more attuned to opportunities to refine his gross and fine motor control than he might ever be again, later in life. The slow, precise movements of the teacher attract and focus his attention. When he chooses to dust a table on his own, he feels impelled by his very nature to repeat the movements as exactly as he can. We can observe him when he chooses this activity of his own volition in the ensuing days and weeks and months, practicing this skill and gradually perfecting it.

At the same time that he is enhancing his control over his body, he is also building his ability to focus and concentrate. We can also observe the enhanced sense of self-confidence and satisfaction that comes over him. It is as if

he is announcing to the world, "I did it myself! You probably didn't think I could do it so well. I did it even better today than I did yesterday!"

He doesn't realize it, but he is also indirectly preparing himself for later academic activities. The ability to focus, to use precise movements, and to follow a sequence of steps are all prerequisites for the geometry and mathematics work. And did you notice the pattern of the dusting? It is always left-to-right and top to bottom, engaging all of the large and small muscles of the shoulder, arm and hand in precisely the motions required for handwriting. So, while he is engaged in the relatively humble act of dusting a table, he is also indirectly preparing himself for later language activities.

Moreover, he is taking responsibility for the care of his own classroom environment, rather than leaving it for others to do. We all want our children to grow up to be responsible adults. What better way to ensure this than by giving them responsibilities from the earliest years?

Activities such as these are collectively called the activities of Practical Life in Montessori philosophy.

Practical Life activities encompass all of the life skills needed to care for oneself and one's environment. They find continued expression in the elementary years as children engage in them not just for the process, but for the sake of the group to which they belong. They continue to have a calming and focusing benefit, as well as enhancing a child's sense of well-being, self-confidence, and self-respect. They are also a major avenue for the continuing development of a sense of responsibility, not just for oneself and one's actions, but for one's social group and classroom, and ultimately for one's society and world.

So, if your little one comes home from school this fall and proudly proclaims that he dusted a table, or washed a chalkboard, or prepared snack, or polished a silver object, you can better understand the source of his satisfaction and recognize the importance of what he has just done. It's

## MIR Offers Twice-a-Week Lunch Program

MIR will once again offer a lunch option on Mondays and Fridays during the school year. Lunches are available for all classes, but only for children staying through the afternoon.

On Mondays (or Tuesdays if there is no school on Monday), the school will offer sandwiches from Subway. Different age groups will have slightly different lunches:

**Toddler and Primary:** The Subway lunch will include sandwich bread with cheese and meat (unless vegetarian is indicated). Lettuce, tomato, and other condiments will be added individually as the child desires.

**Elementary:** Students will get six-inch Subway sandwiches with cheese and meat (unless vegetarian is indicated), let-

tuce, tomato, and mayonnaise.

On Fridays cheese pizza will be available for all age groups with a pepperoni option for Elementary students.

All lunches will include fruit and vegetables on the side as well as a beverage. The price for a Toddler single lunch is \$3. Primary and Elementary single lunches are \$4. You may sign up for lunch on Monday or Friday on the classroom sign-in sheets. Please note if your child requires a vegetarian lunch.

Monday lunches began on Monday, August 29 and Friday lunches begin on September 2. The lunch count is taken by 9:15 AM. If your child will be late to school and will need a lunch, please notify the office before 9:15 AM.

## PTM NEWS AND NOTES *(cont.)*

*(Continued from page 2)*

the time it takes to save and collect. The coordinators donate their time to submit the coupons twice yearly.

If you have any questions regarding the BoxTop program, please come by the PTM table at Back to School Night or ask your PTM room reps. Happy collecting, and thank you!

### Support the Innisbrook Gift Wrap Sale

MIR families will again have the opportunity to participate in our Innisbrook gift wrap sale, which runs September 9–30.

### Give Your Child a Night Under the Stars

Enjoy a night out while we take care of your children (ages 5–12) at **Camp Montessori on Friday, September 30** beginning at 6:30 PM. Teachers, students, and parent volunteers will pitch tents under the trees of MIR, cook hotdogs and hamburgers, sing songs, and tell stories. In the morning everyone will enjoy a pancake breakfast.

Visit the office to sign up. Fees are \$30 per child or \$15 for children accompanied by a parent volunteer and are due at sign-up. Parents who volunteer as chaperones will be asked to help with cooking, clean-up, and activities. Camp Montessori will be followed immediately by Parent Work Day.

Funds collected support PTM-sponsored events such as the Halloween and Spring carnivals, Camp Montessori, sponsorship of guest speakers, and PTM donations to MIR such as new tricycles and playground improvements.

You are not required to participate, but we hope you consider doing so. Look for order forms in your parent folder. You may place your order online or bring in your form and we will place it for you. Items purchased will be delivered to your child's classroom. Out-of-town friends and family may order online at [innisbrook.com](http://innisbrook.com). Our school code is 102074.



### Parent Work Day: Many Hands Make Light Work

MIR will hold its fall Parent Work Day on Saturday, October 1, 8:30–11:30 AM. With your capable help, we can get the school in top shape for the school year. Tasks range from gardening to painting to mending and more. Check in Saturday morning to be assigned a task.

This is a great way to fulfill your volunteer hours, meet other parents, and have fun, too. Thank you for your help!

### Bluebird Running Club Resumes September 2

Led by teachers Jean Bonner-Drinkwine, Teesie Emge, and Emily Fitzgerald, the running club meets 7:30 AM Fridays outside the MIR office and runs until 8:15 AM. Children ages 6 and older are welcome to join. They should wear running shoes and bring a water bottle. Write "RC" next to your child's name on the sign-up sheets and you will not be charged for childcare. We do not meet on rainy days. Parents are welcome to join, too. Children who run with us will be invited to run at Mt. SAC this fall.

## A Few Guidelines to Ensure a Smooth Year

We are looking forward to a wonderful year partnering with you to help your child reach their full potential. Following are a few rules to keep in mind for the school year.

**Please drive no more than 5 mph in the parking lot.** Small children have a habit of darting into the middle of the lot faster than their parents can catch them (amazing how fast those little legs can move). Be on the lookout and drive slowly!

**Remember to sign your child in and out.** This is required by state licensing regulations but more importantly it is crucial in an emergency, as the sign-in sheets are used to help track all children. We also need you to be accurate about what time you sign your child in and out. Because this information is so important, you will be charged \$9.50 for each time you do not sign your child in or out.

**Bring medications to the office.** Medications must be dispensed by the office, even for older children. Please sign them in at the office. They must be in their original container with the name of the child written on it.

**Please do not park at the curb to drop off your child.** Curbside drop-off is available to Elementary students and to Primary students on the main campus. You may pull up and sign in your child from the curb, but please do not park and leave your car—this blocks the line behind you. Use a parking space if necessary.

**For more information on the school, its policies, and what to expect this year, join us for Back-to-School Night on Thursday, September 8 at 5:15 p.m.**

## Healthy School, Happy Children

With the start of school, and with many children entering school for the first time, we start to see sniffles, coughs, and sneezes soon into the school year.

With your help, we can reduce the spread of illness. To ensure a healthy school and happy children, we must ask you to keep your children home when sick, even if they are only mildly ill.

MIR defines a fever as 99.9 degrees or higher and requires that children are fever-free for 24 hours before attending school. Any child showing signs of active illness, such as a runny nose or cough due to a cold, should stay home and will be sent home if brought to school to maintain the health and safety of our community.

We do understand that it can be hard sometimes if a child seems mostly “fine,” but with so many very young children and some children with more vulnerable immune systems, we must err on the side of caution and have ill children stay home.

MIR will notify parents if more severe or contagious illnesses break out, such as strep throat, so that you can take necessary precautions.



## Coffee, Tea, and M.E. (Montessori Education) Gives You the Opportunity to Ask Those Important Questions

On the third Friday of each month, Head of School Maura Joyce and Assistant Head of School Peter Davidson host Coffee, Tea, and M.E., an informal gathering at which you can ask any questions you have about Montessori education, MIR, or education in general. The format for this is very flexible and open to topics of the group’s choice or, if participants prefer, Maura and Peter will introduce a topic for discussion.

To provide more opportunities for parents to join us, most Coffee, Tea, and M.E. discussions will be held twice, at 8:45 AM and at 4 PM. On days with Bluebird Assemblies, the discussions will take place at 4 PM. All discussions will be held in the Yoga room. Coffee, tea, and treats will be provided. **The first Coffee, Tea and M.E. will be held on Friday, September 16.**

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# BIRTHDAYS



## students

William Seal	9/2
Shanna Ampaanpenrot	9/3
Henry Yu	9/3
Yasmin Asgarzadie	9/5
Mallory Pleiss	9/7
Carson Lundgren	9/8
Benjamin Murphy	9/8
Shane Ampaanpenrot	9/9
Jennifer Hitchcock	9/9
Matthew Law	9/10
Sophia Perez	9/10
Josef Emge	9/12
Cole Hanson	9/13
Arta Raoufi	9/14
Tobias Emge	9/15
Nelan-Ay Miller	9/16
Neel Choksey	9/17
Santiago Chivite	9/20
Thomas Valenzuela	9/20
Gabriel Ortega	9/22
Valentino Farre	9/25
Ryan Cocchia	9/26
Penelope Dow	9/26
Ananth Narayanan	9/26
Colin Garcia	9/27
Betty Glukhovskiy	9/27
James Stewart	9/27
Sadie Brown	9/30
Omar Najjar	9/30
Amelie Zalsman	9/30

## staff

Saskia de Jong	9/3
Peter Davidson	9/8
Tiara Walker	9/10
Jean Bonner-Drinkwine	9/13
Jenny Ewalt	9/17
Kate Harris	9/28

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well as get snacks.

**At 5:30 PM** the official program will begin with a welcome by Head of School Maura Joyce followed by an introduction to MIR staff, Board of Trustees, and the PTM Board.

**At 6 PM** Primary and Elementary Orientations begin. Primary students go to classes with parents. The assistants have planned a special activity for them. We regret that we are unable to include younger or older siblings.

Elementary teachers, parents, and students meet in their classrooms. Elementary students have been working hard on presentations for Back to School Night and need a quiet, attentive audience. **It is strongly recommended that toddlers and babies be taken home to avoid disrupting these important meetings.**

The evening concludes at 7 PM.

## Peace Day is Sept. 21

MIR and The Grove School will observe the United Nations' International Day of Peace together on Wednesday, September 21, gathering at the MIR Peace Pole on the north campus. Students and classes will observe the day in several ways, from sharing personal essays to class performances.

"Peace Day" was established by UN resolution in 1981 to coincide with the opening of the UN General Assembly and provides an opportunity for individuals, organizations, and nations to create practical acts of peace on a shared date. You are welcome to join our observance.

## September 2011

<b>29</b> First day of school	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>5</b> <b>LABOR DAY</b> School closed. No childcare available.	<b>6</b> Lango classes	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> Lango classes <b>SCHOOL CLOSSES AT 5 PM</b> Back to School Night, 5:15 PM Primary/Elem class orientations, 6 PM	<b>9</b> PTM Innsbrook Giftwrap sale begins
<b>12</b> Soccer clinic (6-8 yr olds), 3:30 PM	<b>13</b> Lango classes WASC Focus Group informational meeting, 6 PM	<b>14</b> Soccer clinic (9 and older), 3:30 PM	<b>15</b> Lango classes	<b>16</b> Coffee, Tea, and M.E., 8:45 AM and 4 PM (two offerings)
<b>19</b> Soccer clinic (6-8 yr olds), 3:30 PM	<b>20</b> Lango classes Toddler parent orientation, 6 PM	<b>21</b>  International Day of Peace Soccer clinic (9 and older), 3:30 PM	<b>22</b> Lango classes PTM Room Rep. orientation, 6 PM	<b>23</b>
<b>26</b> Soccer clinic (6-8 yr olds), 3:30 PM  Board of Trustees Open Forum, 6:30 PM	<b>27</b> Lango classes	<b>28</b> Soccer clinic (9 and older), 3:30 PM	<b>29</b> Lango classes	<b>30/1</b> Bluebird Assembly, 9:15 AM Innsbrook Giftwrap orders due Camp MIR, 6:30 PM  Parent work day, 8:30-11:30 AM