

*Pennsylvania Montessori Alliance*

*November 6, 2010*

Angela Minahan welcomed the participants to the meeting at Penn-Mont Academy. An agenda was distributed but before any work was done, it was important to make introductions.

The participants at the meeting:

Angela Minahan-Pittsburgh Montessori

Linda Edsall-Garden Montessori

Mary Cae Williams-New School of Lancaster

Sibyl Seachrist-New School of Lancaster

Michelle Hartye-Penn Mont Academy

Stephanie Conrad-Campus School of Carlow University

Mary Zajac-Penn Mont Academy

Rebecca Chubb-Children's House of Hershey

Tricia Cossick-Our Children's Center

Leigh Hurtz-Our Children's Center

Jocelyn Santucci-Garden Montessori

Sandy Smith-Garden Montessori

Anthony Pierello-Montessori Regional Charter School

## **Agenda:**

**Shared Vision:** Angela reiterated that we are all bound by a shared interest in Montessori education. The idea of the meeting was to investigate the interest in a state wide Montessori group

**Montessori State Organizations:** Angela researched 2 states with Montessori groups: California and South Carolina. Michelle mentioned that New Jersey and Illinois also have state wide groups. Angela mentioned that a Montessori representative sits on the state Department of Education in South Carolina.

The initial vision for the PA group is a non-profit entity with a board including elected officers and representatives from Montessori schools and other interested parties. Group discussion focused on the difficulty of establishing by-laws that aren't generic but are broad enough for a community to work with. One agreed upon priority was opportunities for Montessorians to communicate. Angela mentioned that the event was sponsored by GPMS, meaning all communication efforts were paid for from that group's funds. In moving forward, the need for funding will need to be taken into consideration.

The first committee to be discussed was a curriculum committee. The group spent a good deal of time discussing curriculum. Although there are differences among our training programs and albums we agreed that the work is what is important and the objectives of lessons should be the same. Michelle mentioned that AMS is exploring the idea of creating a National curriculum. Tricia feels administrators would have questions about the degree of control coming from AMS. This idea is in initial stages but the curriculum committee should be aware of such an initiative.

Another interest/committee subject is the area of certification. Montessori training is not eligible for state certification at this point in time. This affects schools greatly in the age of NCLB and the requirements of “highly-qualified teachers”. Michelle mentioned that one hurdle to state accreditation of Montessori teaching credential is the variety of training programs and that MACTE certifies AMS, AMI, and CGMS programs but there are many other programs out there.

The discussion moved on to alignment with state standards. Anthony shared his school’s document aligning the scope and sequence of each lesson to the appropriate standard. This document serves as the floor for the school’s curriculum and took 3 years (11 dedicated in-service days per year) to develop.

Many members of the group mentioned the new CORE National standards and questioned the effect this would have on the PA standards we are currently working under.

Stephanie stated that her Master’s thesis is to align the PA Early Learning Standards with the Montessori 3-6 lessons, materials and routines in a crosswalk document. She is willing to share her thesis with the PA Montessori Alliance.

Michelle questioned how we would demonstrate alignment. Angela stated that a rubric is a common first step and we could also provide narrative reports. Such alignment is required is for public programs and helpful for private programs where people (parents) often want more detailed information. Tricia pointed out that it is important parents trust in our programs. Can alignment help build trust?

Regulations were put aside as we began to discuss a conference and other forms of continuing education. A Montessori conference is one of a select few ways for Montessorians to have meaningful professional development but it is often difficult for many to attend the National

AMS conference. (Michelle mentioned NJMAC is sponsoring a conference in Edison on March 4<sup>th</sup>-perhaps we could attend?) We chose Pennsylvania Montessori Alliance as the name for our group and began exploring the types of professional development opportunities we could offer to group members. Angela mentioned contacting Carlow and Duquesne and Michelle has contacts at Penn State. Is it possible to work with the Department of Education? Michelle also mentioned that AMS is considering the requirement of continuing education to keep an active Montessori credential. Many participants stated the need for ACT 48 hours. The charter school in Erie has a connection with the local university who works with the school's Montessori curriculum coordinator. Mary suggested working with the IU. Penn Mont is able to provide ACT 48 hours and Mary plans professional development based on staff goals.

Tricia noted that the Alliance could be meaningful by providing in-service statewide, perhaps by scheduling a common in-service day. The public schools don't set their own calendar. Private schools vary. And the charter program has some flexibility. Perhaps sites could be found where ACT 48 approved activities could take place all centered on a common Montessori theme. All schools will be encouraged to share their 2011-2012 school calendars so a state wide PD could be planned.

**Finances:** Funding is necessary for our group. The funding could come from memberships: both school and individual; along with sponsorships and grants. Anthony mentioned that some of his school's partners are interested parties in Montessori education but they are viewed as partners and products are not endorsed by the acceptance of sponsorship funds.

Technology can be used to cut costs in regards to individual communication. If mailings are necessary, postcards save postage fees and paper costs.

**Montessori Education Week:** MEW provides an opportunity to celebrate our shared Montessori interest and coordinate our efforts as a group. Angela would like every school to share their events, and possibly coordinate.

**Research:** Pittsburgh Montessori applied for a grant from the 3 Rivers Reading Association. This will enable them to share what they do, and the success of Montessori. Michelle discussed that outside research can be brought in and applied to Montessori; along with inside research such as Angeline Stoll Lilliard's work. Sibyl mentioned the need for inside/out and outside/in networking and communication.

**Website:** A PA Montessori Alliance site could feature a discussion board, published articles, resources and links.

**Public Relations:** We want to get the word out about Montessori education and our group's efforts.

**Goals:** We took time to be sure we are in agreement in order to get started. Discussion ensued that Montessori goals may not be the same as other education entity's goals. The movie "Race to Nowhere" is being shown by many Montessori schools while other schools participate in Race to the Top. This led to the question "*How do we measure student growth?*" Anthony reminded the group that Montessori can shine by showing schools that are effective and work. Michelle discussed the importance of a Montessori seat at the public policy table. Anthony used the example of the Erie charter school as a high quality Montessori program where children also do well on the PSSA. We emphasized the need for teaching using Montessori methods and techniques.

The government is data driven and we need valid data collection to drive results. Successful results aid the promotion of Montessori. The promotion of successful Montessori helps us build trust among clients.

We work so hard. A unified group will help us share resources.

**Committees were officially formed.**

**Curriculum and Standards:** Stephanie and Leigh will work on 3-6. Anthony and Angela on elementary.

**Teaching credential:** Tricia and Anthony

**Bylaws and accreditation:** Michelle

**Communication:** Tricia. Tricia will set up a google group or private web site

**Regulations:** Mary Kay and Sibyl. They will examine private and public, DPW and Dept of Ed. along with programs like summer care or extended day.

**Celebrations:** Rebecca and Tricia. The first celebration will be Montessori Education Week. Perhaps we can share what we are doing and they will organize it and share. They can also put together a public policy packet about Montessori education featuring letters and photos or videos of classrooms in action. Sandy mentioned that the theory is abstract and it can be hard for parents to understand what Montessori education is all about. Angela will share a letter she has used for MEW in the past.

**Looking ahead:** We have questions about a conference: where? when?

Could we gather as a PA group at the AMS conference in Chicago??

**What are the priorities:** Plan MEW

Start working on committees

Hold a spring meeting to set by-laws and elect officers. To collect membership fees we have to offer something appropriate, useful.

To cover expenses until membership/sponsorships are in place we can pass the hat and work in kind. Costs should be tracked as we will ultimately need a budget.

**Next year:** hold professional development day to build community, share resources and speak in a common language.

***Next Meeting:***

***April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011***

***11:00***

***Penn Mont***

Before we left Mary Cae made some information available regarding PA CAPE. AMS is a member group of national CAPE.

~submitted by Stephanie Conrad