

NAMTA's Role in the History of Montessori Adolescent Programming

Since 1976, NAMTA has provided both documentation and international leadership in bringing the efforts of Montessori adolescent education into focus and providing Montessori guidance for teachers in newly formed or existing adolescent programs. NAMTA's seminars, conferences, and summer intensives have established a strong heritage of best practices through evolving school programs. The work has included baseline research, school consultation, publications, and five colloquia that were attended by AMI trainers and practitioners, including Renilde Montessori and Camillo Grazzini. In addition, NAMTA established a national resource coordinator, Pat Ludick, for on-site consultation and documentation of ongoing projects.

The NAMTA Center for Montessori Adolescent Studies (NCMAS), opened in June 2004, represents the culmination of NAMTA's more than thirty years of Montessori adolescent leadership. The work of the NCMAS is to establish program design and validity based directly on the educational syllabus or framework suggested by the writings of Maria Montessori found in the Appendices of *From Childhood to Adolescence*. Already having set in motion a prototype Erdkinder-inspired model for ages 12-15 (Hershey Montessori School adolescent program on the farm), NCMAS, under the direction of David Kahn, will endeavor to match the Farm School's innovative success with the corresponding authentic extension of the Montessori adolescent program through age 18. Subsequent to establishing its own working model, NCMAS will share design elements with a variety of other implementers, documenting a diversity of models to be studied with enough common ground for Montessorians to share experimental results on a universal basis.

In 2003, NAMTA began a summer professional development program titled *A Montessori Orientation to Adolescent Studies*. The *Orientation* is based on the practices of hand-picked programs (approximately 10 selected to date, including the Farm School). In addition to its professional-development offering for Montessori adolescent teachers, the *Orientation* provides the following services:

- consultations for start-ups;
- whole-school integration of a sophisticated plan of work and study for middle school and (currently under construction) high school;
- ongoing professional support; and
- adolescent research from outside the Montessori community in order to facilitate a dialogue with the national adolescent school reform movement.

Montessori adolescent teachers from all over the world have attended the *Orientation* program; a majority of participation is from Canada, the United States, and Mexico.



1996 Adolescent Colloquium participants, front row, seated: John Long, Larry Schaefer, Joen Bettmann, Pat Schaefer, Allyn Travis, Monte Kenison; second row, seated: Tom Postlewaite, Pat Ludick, Linda Davis, Laurie Ewert-Krocker, Peter Gebhardt-Seele, Virginia McHugh, Renilde Montessori, Bob Fleischhacker, Mike Strong, Debra Hershey Guren, Jenny Höglund; standing: John McNamara, Camillo Grazzini, Kay Baker, Margaret Stephenson, Patty Pantano, Deborah Bricker, Alcillia Clifford-Williams, David Kahn. Photo taken by participant Orcillia Oppenheimer. Absent: Paula Polk Lillard.

Origins: Montessori Adolescent Theory into Practice

In 1996, the Montessori Teacher Education Collaborative (MTEC) sponsored a seminal event, The Adolescent Colloquium, in Cleveland, Ohio, bringing together eminent teacher trainers and adolescent practitioners of the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI, based in Amsterdam). One outcome of this first Colloquium was the founding of a Montessori farm school in northeast Ohio in 2000 by David Kahn, Debra Hershey Guren, and the Hershey Montessori School. The Hershey Montessori School adolescent program on the farm answers the need for a new kind of experiment, a need articulated at the 1996 Colloquium by both Camillo Grazzini (Director of Training at the prestigious AMI teacher training center in Bergamo, Italy) and Renilde Montessori (General Secretary of AMI and granddaughter of Maria Montessori):

The funds and resources ... could ... be used for setting up an actual Erdkinder community. This could then serve as a model and point of reference for the whole country, as a sort of national Erdkinder which would be open to adolescents from all parts of the country and which could provide a physical base for all further initiatives.... (Camillo Grazzini)

The Farm School was assisted by considerable outside philanthropy, including four major donors: The Hershey Foundation, Mrs. Orcillia Oppenheimer (capital), The Dekko Foundation (capital and research), and the O'Shaughnessy Foundation (research).

From its inception until November 2003, this farm school experiment received the pedagogical review of Camillo Grazzini, who collaborated directly with its founding Program Director, David Kahn. Mr. Grazzini passed away in January, 2004. He will be followed by two lead AMI trainer-mentors, Baiba Krumins Grazzini and Annette M. Haines.

The Hershey Montessori School adolescent program on the farm is the only Montessori adolescent program in the world that has developed a complete prepared environment as described in Maria Montessori's writings (the Appendices to her book *From Childhood to Adolescence*), with a full boarding component. The Farm School is the only existing Montessori adolescent project with an Erdkinder-inspired prepared environment, including a youth "hostel" (dorm), a bed-and-breakfast, an operating farm, and a functioning micro-economy with a community farm market (shop). The Farm School model proved that the Montessori Syllabus is workable and able to provide structure that is comprehensive and uniquely connected to the psychological characteristics of the adolescent.

The focus of NCMAS is also to work with other willing experiments in order to find a universal Montessori approach to working with the adolescent. Once a clarifying model has been set up in Cleveland, the most central focus for consolidation and definition of adolescent program design is the restructuring of third-plane studies to follow a universal syllabus or framework as suggested by Dr. Montessori. Mr. Grazzini mandated this approach in the paper he presented at the 1996 Colloquium:

Therefore, what needs to be set up is not an Erdkinder teacher training center, but a single permanent organizing committee for the whole country, a committee made up of Montessorians.... The task of this committee would be to coordinate all the experiments already existing in the country and to oversee new initiatives in such a way that a reform of the secondary school is gradually brought about, a reform which reflects ever more faithfully Dr. Montessori's ideas.

In its efforts to universalize the needs of Montessori adolescent programs and their teachers, the NAMTA *Montessori Orientation to Adolescent Studies* continues to be subject to scholarly review by university specialists as well as AMI teacher trainers and AMI-trained adolescent practitioners, in order to develop specific requirements for what constitutes Montessori adolescent education for ages 12-18. Thus, the NCMAS will develop a heritage base, working toward a consolidated, if not definitive, Montessori adolescent program for ages 12-18, derived from Montessori writings, AMI trainers, and AMI practitioners working collectively in relation to good adolescent experiments.



Camillo Grazzini

The NAMTA Center for Montessori Adolescent Studies (NCMAS): Project 2012 Completes the Developmental Continuum

NCMAS is dedicated to the furtherance of the AMI effort as it considers the Third Plane of Development (ages 12-18). The AMI tradition refers to the evolving planes of education “from conception to maturity both at home and in society” (AMI article 4b).

Project 2012 is linked to the International Centre for Montessori Studies (Bergamo, Italy), which originated the Montessori elementary movement in the development of the Second Plane of Education; Washington Montessori Institute (Washington, DC); and the Maria Montessori Institute (formerly MMTO, London, England). The solidity of the adolescent theory model for Project 2012 was established by Camillo Grazzini, Director of the Bergamo training center. Subsequently, David Kahn was appointed to the Bergamo staff as part of the adolescent studies arising out of Mr. Grazzini’s devotion to the cause. The work therefore remains in the context of the AMI heritage “to maintain, propagate, and further the ideas of Dr. Maria Montessori for the full development of the human being” (AMI Objectives).

In 2004, The Hershey Foundation, Mrs. Orcillia Oppenheimer, and the Dekko Foundation committed to the funding of Project 2012 over the next eight years for the sake of Montessori secondary experimentation and consolidation. We are now five years into the project.

In its first four years of development (2005-09), Project 2012 accomplished the following: 1) the connecting of eight high school projects, 2) the opening of Montessori High School at University Circle (Cleveland, OH), 3) significant progress toward realization of the Montessori/International Baccalaureate high school curriculum, 4) the expansion of the Montessori Orientation to include high school, 5) the implementation of the third, fourth, and fifth Adolescent Colloquia, and 6) the formation of history and math “councils” or curriculum initiatives.

In October, 2005, sixty participants from all over the world attended the third Adolescent Colloquium, which endeavored to generate a framework for authentic theory into practice for ages 12-18, with both AMI trainers and practitioners envisioning a universal picture of the whole of adolescence and the breadth of Montessori education. In April, 2008, the Fourth Adolescent Colloquium convened in Chicago, putting forward a specific profile of rural-urban programming from 12-18, including the full frameworks for algebra, geometry, trigonometry, and calculus; chemistry, biology, and physics; literature and writing; environmental systems and geography; visual arts, drama, and music; psychology and human development; and theory of knowledge.

The NAMTA Center for Montessori Adolescent Studies is taking the last steps to complete its mission by establishing Montessori High School in University Circle, Cleveland, Ohio (MHS). MHS offers students an interdisciplinary experience focusing on change, nature, and society in keeping with the themes found in cosmic education and in Maria Montessori’s book *Education and Peace*. Taking on the academic challenge of the International Baccalaureate Programme, the curriculum weaves academic subjects evolved from within the high school with diverse specialized environments including in-depth connections with many of the cultural institutions located in Cleveland’s University Circle neighborhood. These include The Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Cleveland Botanical Garden, the Western Reserve Historical Society, the Cleveland Institute of Music, the Cleveland Museum of Art, The Cleveland Institute of Art, Case Western Reserve University, One to One Fitness Center, The Cleveland Clinic, and The Cleveland Play House.

This place-based approach within the one-square-mile cultural center of University Circle fully integrates the scope and sequence of the International Baccalaureate Programme with the neighborhood’s institutions and residents, an arrangement augmented by the school’s boarding approach. MHS opened in the fall of 2008. In addition to its cultural immersion in the Cleveland community and institutions, MHS is also devoted to providing a model for export for the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, with full documentation of its curriculum program and experiential process.