

# THE BEST FOR THE YOUNGEST: THE PATH TOWARD UNITY

by Connie Black, Roxana Linares, Molly O'Shaughnessy

*In this three-part article, Molly O' Shaughnessy gives the first principles that break down the myths of poverty and discusses the actual community partnerships that impact the poverty cycle and make Montessori education accessible for all children. Next, Connie Black writes about the education process and outreach programs at the Montessori Center of Minnesota where interdisciplinary teams engage the entire family to make a positive change in the quality of life. Finally, Roxana Linares describes her center, Centro, which emphasizes health, well-being, family engagement, adolescent (youth) development, adult literacy, self-help, and family cooperatives in a Hispanic community.*

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**Connie Black** is the director of outreach programs at the Montessori Center of Minnesota and is a primary AMI trainer, guest lecturer, and consultant. She holds a BA in English and theater from the University of Tennessee-Martin and an M.Ed from Loyola University, Maryland. Connie has fifteen years of experience in Montessori settings as well as eight years working with special needs children in public school settings.

**Roxana Linares** is the executive director of Centro, a partnership with Latino and Chicano families. She holds an MA in educational policy and administration from the University of Minnesota and has served in leadership at Centro for eight years. Roxana combines workplace and life experiences from living in Peru and the United States. These experiences provide an excellent background for multicultural child, teen, and adult education.

**Molly O'Shaughnessy** is an AMI teacher trainer, international lecturer, and Montessori consultant. She has served as the director of training at the Montessori Center of Minnesota since 1996. Molly is deeply committed to working at a grassroots level to increase access to quality Montessori programs for children living in poverty. Through her outreach efforts, Montessori Partners Serving all Children was initiated with the mission to open ten high-quality Montessori programs in the state of Minnesota for underserved communities. This effort is one of AMI's Educateurs sans Frontieres projects and is dedicated to assisting children through the Montessori approach to education.

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## PART 1. THE PATH TOWARD UNITY

Molly O'Shaughnessy

Nothing that is formed in infancy can ever be wholly eradicated. (*The Absorbent Mind* 65)

Thank you for inviting my colleagues and me to address this very important conference. In the face of more and more evidence that the first three years of life are the most critical, it is increasingly important for educators and communities to work together with the vision of the young child foremost in our minds. In the words of Peter Senge, "A vision can die if people forget their connection to one another" (213).

Five years ago, there were hundreds of people that we at the Montessori Center of Minnesota did not know existed—we didn't know about them and they didn't know about us. I did not know Roxana Linares, who will share her story in a few minutes. I did not know her organization, Centro. Five years ago I did not know Bao Vang or her organization, Hmong American Partnership. Five years ago, I did not know Amy Donaldson and the Mdewakanton Sioux Community. Five years ago, I did not know of Janice LaFloe's dream of bringing language revitalization to her American Indian community through her Montessori American Indian Center.

But we shared a common vision for children, and that vision has brought us together. We discovered, as an often-quoted metaphor from the late Yale Divinity School professor H. E. Luccock puts it, that "No one can whistle a symphony. It takes a whole orchestra to play it." Every piece of our orchestra represents a community, and each of our partners is making music happen in his or her own community. Collectively, we are part of an orchestra finding common ground in our commitment to children, particularly those living in poverty or with other educational disparities.

There are so many organizations serving children that share common ground: a commitment to creating a better world for all children. These are the people who need to find each other, to work together, to weave a web so strong that it cannot be broken by anything or anyone. This is the mission of Montessori Partners

Serving All Children. It is all about connection—finding and working together with like-minded people.

### **Making Montessori Accessible**

I have been in this work for forty years, and the question we get the most is this: “Montessori seems so respectful of children and their developmental process, and it seems so logical in its approach. Why isn’t it available to more children?” I have asked myself the same question many times. The reasons given are many:

- There’s too much freedom.
- It’s too rigid.
- It’s religiously based.
- The children are too independent.
- The children aren’t allowed to be creative.
- The teachers don’t talk to the children.
- The children can’t talk to each other.
- It’s good in math but not in language.
- It’s old-fashioned.
- It’s the “best-kept secret.”
- It’s too good for “our kind of children.”
- It’s only for the rich.
- It’s not accessible for those who need it most.
- It’s too expensive.

The first reaction might be to defend our position and explain why these perceptions are incorrect. (And of course some of them are currently true.) But once we began asking the right questions, which facilitated a dialogue, we realized that very often there is

a disconnect between people's *perception* of Montessori and what they actually believe about children. The reality is that a majority of people are committed to the core values and principles that Montessori represents, but they don't associate the two because of their perceptions about Montessori.

We all have belief systems—they help smooth functioning in life. But they can keep us closed, interfere with decision making, prevent us from growing, and feed our fears. When we become trapped by categories, we operate with blinders on and are unwilling or unable to think “outside the box”—an essential component to the creative process, problem solving, and vision. And unfortunately, most directions are on the outside of the box.

In 2002, the Montessori Center of Minnesota invited Montessorians, community leaders, and others interested in children to hear a vision of outreach that would extend our work into the community in an effort to bring Montessori education to at-risk children with the long-term goal of further and extensive replication of the model to the neediest areas in the Twin Cities. Furthermore, the vision was to offer the “best practices” of Montessori to other child-care providers and agencies. This was the birth of Montessori Partners Serving All Children, our partnerships with community-led schools in underserved neighborhoods.

After four years of being involved with the expansion project, we have had some profound insights that have actually deepened and broadened our vision, and our commitment to the work. I personally am a changed person.

### **Poverty and Learning**

Why isn't Montessori available to more children? Maria Montessori maintained that education is not difficult if we commit to never abandoning the child. How many ways do we abandon the child? Here are a few:

- Environments that don't meet their needs
- Overstimulation
- Doing too much for them

But there are larger, systemic issues that interfere with optimal development, and the most important one is poverty. Consider these startling statistics:

- 46.5 million people in the United States lived in poverty in 2012 (U.S. Census Bureau).
- 35% of them (16 million) were under 18 years of age (U.S. Census Bureau).
- Globally, nearly half of the world’s population lives in poverty (World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2008*), and more than 1.2 billion live in extreme poverty—making less than \$1.25 a day (World Bank, “Poverty Overview”).

Poverty, like Montessori education, is surrounded by many myths and misconceptions:

*Myth:* Poor people are unmotivated and have a weak work ethic.

*Reality:* Eighty-three percent of children from low-income families have at least one employed parent; close to 60% have at least one parent who works full-time and year-round. According to the Economic Policy Institute, poor working adults spend more time working each week than their wealthier counterparts.

*Myth:* Poor parents are uninvolved in their children’s learning, largely because they do not value education.

*Reality:* Low-income parents hold the same attitudes about education that wealthy parents do. Low-income parents are less likely to attend school functions or volunteer—not because they care less, but because they have less access to school involvement than their wealthier peers. They are more likely to work multiple jobs, to

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work evenings, to have jobs without paid leave, and to be unable to afford child care and public transportation.

*Myth:* Poor parents are linguistically deficient.

*Reality:* All people, regardless of the languages and the language varieties they speak, use a full continuum of language registers. Linguists have known for decades that all language varieties are highly structured with complex grammatical rules.

*Myth:* Poor people tend to abuse drugs and alcohol.

*Reality:* Poor people are no more likely than their wealthier counterparts to abuse alcohol or drugs. Studies have shown that considering alcohol and illicit drugs together, wealthy people are more likely than poor people to be substance abusers. (Gorski 33-34)

The myth of a “culture of poverty” distracts us from a culture of classism that *does* exist:

- It leads us to have low expectations of children.
- It makes teachers fear their most powerless pupils.
- It diverts attention from what people in poverty do have in common: inequitable access to basic human rights.
- It leads to a belief in a deficit theory—defining students by their weaknesses rather than their strengths.

What can we do to dispel myths about poverty and promote learning for all children?

- Educate ourselves about class and poverty.
- Reject the deficit theory and help others to unlearn misconceptions about poverty.
- Make school involvement accessible to all families.
- Invite colleagues to observe our teaching for signs of bias.



Courtesy of Centro Siembra

- Respond when colleagues and others stereotype poor students or parents.
- Fight to keep low-income children from being assigned unjustly to special education.
- Fight to ensure that school meal programs offer healthy options.

### **Cultivating Community**

We must constantly build dikes of courage to hold back the flood of fear. (King 119)

We need to create a global community that is respectful and embraces the traditions, values, and history of all the cultures represented in our country and world. Einstein stated that people's value should be based primarily on how far their feelings, thoughts, and actions promoted the good of their community. As a world community, we must take an ethical perspective on our collective responsibilities for the healthy evolution of our civilization. "The world is balanced on a fulcrum and by virtue of our choices, it can swing in either direction" (Thomashow 69).

Our work must begin with children. Montessori, as a product of her own creative spirit, was able to see what was invisible to others. She saw the fate of the future within the child, an embryo enclosed in flesh, with the power to create a world we cannot even imagine. She proclaimed that an intelligent help must be given to protect this most creative period of life. She writes,

Rich educational experiences and their concomitant achievement levels are the strongest means of breaking cycles of poverty.

Perhaps this new humanity will solve the great problems of society which for us have been unsolvable. Perhaps we, all the grown-up people, thinking within the limitations and hardness of our narrow understanding, have thought these problems unsolvable; but they are solvable by the child because he takes all not directly, but indirectly, raising himself to a higher level, for the child is growing and growing on the next plane. . . . We cannot solve them directly, but they become solved by themselves if we have the power to go to a higher plane. And the child begins perhaps to push humanity on to this next higher plane in which many or all of our unsolvable problems can be solved.

This is the hope we have—a hope in a new humanity that will come from this new education, an education that is a collaboration of man and the universe, that is a help for evolution, for the incarnation of man. (*Reconstruction in Education* 14).

## PART 2. COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Connie Black

Minneapolis mayor R. T. Rybak recently announced, “Improving education for all children is clearly the civil rights issue of our time, and there is almost no region in the country that has to close more of a gap than Minneapolis-Saint Paul. We clearly face a crisis, but it can also be our greatest opportunity.”

At the Montessori Center of Minnesota, we have intentionally established our commitment to taking the Montessori movement back

to its roots. As our printed brochures say, a Montessori education is not for low-income or affluent families. It is for all: all families, all cultures, and all communities. We know that all children are born with a nebula of potential and that given the support of a developmentally responsive environment, all children can develop fully, learn, and achieve. We will continue to work to make the opportunity for a high-quality, authentic Montessori developmental education accessible to every family who wishes it for its children.

The name of our outreach program has changed in the last year to better reflect that mission as well as our goal to co-develop ten high-quality early childhood Montessori programs within culturally rooted communities to serve families with limited resources. Montessori Partners Serving All Children encompasses our partnerships, our commitment to serving optimal development, and our commitment to increasing access for every child. We are a movement of many. We are partnering with other organizations, institutions, neighborhoods, and families to empower communities through enabling their children. When we can change communities in this way, we change the quality of life for all of us.

Our new initiative in conjunction with St. Catherine University is a prime example. This collaboration between the Montessori Center of Minnesota, our partner schools, and St. Catherine University will help families address social, emotional, behavioral, and physical barriers to their children's full development. Supported by a three-year grant from the Better Way Foundation, the work aims to help children who are at risk for poor health and academic outcomes become ready to succeed in school and life, to increase parent/caregiver capacity to support healthy child development, and to develop St. Catherine students' ability to work interprofessionally in serving diverse communities.

We know that to break cycles of poverty we have to touch more than the children. We must engage the whole family to see positive change communitywide. Our parent engagement coordinator, Mary Santelman, and our licensed social worker, Monica Marrocco, are partnering with families to create connections between the Montessori program and the child's home. These connections are built on relating, listening, welcoming, and shared decision making. Mary



Courtesy of Centro Siembra

and Monica are key to establishing attitudes of doing with as opposed to doing to. They help us to lead with our ears, listening to what parents and families think, dream, and worry about, so that we can most appropriately respond to needs. Working beyond the walls of the school, our vision encompasses the entire neighborhood, offering opportunities for transformational change—for the school, for the community, for the family, and for the child.

We currently have seven partner programs: four in operation, one in process of renovating space, two more with staff in place and just searching for affordable facilities in which to open their Children’s Houses. We are in the development phase with several other potential partners across the state and hope to make announcements soon as agreements are signed and work begins in those communities.

Rich educational experiences and their concomitant achievement levels are the strongest means of breaking cycles of poverty. The four programs in operation participated in the first year of a three-year program evaluation during 2012–13 and already showed positive outcomes. The data show no achievement gap by ethnicity, home language, or economic status for children in the four schools who took the Bracken Basic Concept Scale and in the data analyzed for

the Work Sampling System. These schools include Centro Siembra, which serves primarily English language learners.

It is our goal not only to continue our partnerships locally on behalf of the children of Minnesota but also to ultimately partner with others across the nation who are doing similar work. We hope to be part of developing a replicable model that can be used as a template for creating access to high-quality Montessori early childhood experiences.

### PART 3. CENTRO SIEMBRA MONTESSORI

#### Roxana Linares

Centro was founded in 1974 by Marcela Trujillo, a Chicana who decided to create a space where Latino mothers and their children could thrive. Almost forty years later we continue her work, with the vision for a vibrant, diverse, and inclusive Latino community that belongs and contributes to the social and economic vitality of Minnesota.

Centro seeks to address disparities. Although the poverty rate in Minnesota is lower than the national average—11.4%, compared with 15.9% nationally—the rate for Latinos in our state is 25.7%, compared with 8.1% for whites. And while Minnesota’s median household income in 2012 was \$58,906, compared with the U.S. median income of \$51,371, the median income for Minnesota Lati-

Poverty Rates 2012		Median Income 2012	
All Minnesotans	11.4%	All Minnesotans	\$58,906
Black /African American	37.8%	Black /African American	\$28,136
American Indian	25.7%	American Indian	\$32,153
Asian	15.9%	Asian	\$65,959
White	8.1%	White	\$61,667



Courtesy of Centro

nos in 2012 was \$41,718. Other minorities are also affected by these disparities, as shown previously in the tables (statistics from *Minnesota: The Land of Unequal Opportunity*).

It is also worrying that 12% of the population in Minnesota is living in poverty: 326,000 people in the Twin Cities. Poverty rates are highest among children under seventeen. According to the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, “Being poor is not just about the lack of money. It is also about having limited social connections, being invisible, and not having the access, skills, or opportunity to do better” (Upin).

Centro seeks to change these statistics. Our mission is “to contribute to the well-being and full participation of Latin@s [sic] through education and family engagement.” We envision a vibrant, diverse, and inclusive Latino community that belongs and contributes to the social and economic vitality of Minnesota. To create this community,

we have established two departments: the Education Department and the Health & Wellness Department.

### **Health & Wellness Department: Promoting Family Well-Being**

We know there is “a powerful relation between our emotional experiences as children and our adult emotional [and] physical health” (Felitti 44). The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Study, an ongoing collaborative research project between the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta and Kaiser Permanente in San Diego, is finding that “ACEs are strongly related to the development and prevalence of risk factors for disease, and health and social well-being throughout the lifespan” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). ACEs can be, among others, any of the following:

- Emotional, physical, or sexual abuse
- Emotional or physical neglect
- Household dysfunction, such as a mother treated violently
- Household substance abuse
- Household mental illness
- Parental separation or divorce
- An incarcerated household member

Centro’s Health & Wellness Department staff works with community members to prevent or address ACEs. They help families access health insurance. They engage women and their partners in Centering Pregnancy workshops, car seat workshops, and *Pequeño Mundo* (Little World), a parenting class for parents with children from birth to three years old. Because girls of color are more frequently the victims of abuse inside and outside of the home, women at Centro talk about domestic violence in a cross-cultural project that includes Latino, Liberian, Indian, and Hmong communities. Men are also engaged to prevent and stop domestic violence through workshops led by male therapists. Healing takes place in a culturally respectful environment. This past September, for example, two *curanderas*

(traditional healers) worked with more than 100 participants, addressing emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being. This holistic approach is present in all our programs.

In Minnesota, elders of color, women, those with lower levels of education, and noncitizens all experience higher poverty rates. In Hennepin County, more than 25% of Latino families are living in poverty; of these, 32% are children. Centro's Emergency Latino Food Shelf provides seniors and families with referrals to help them achieve economic stability as well as obtain nutritious food. In addition, seniors are encouraged to join a Latino seniors' program, where they exercise, learn computer skills, and meet individually with a case manager. Because medical expenses can be a big problem for seniors on fixed incomes, seniors learn about chronic disease management, healthy eating, and monitoring their weight and blood sugar.

### **Education Department: Helping Families Succeed**

Centro recently moved its parent workshops into its Education Department, under the heading of Family Engagement, to promote social inclusion. *La familia* is the stabilizing element in Latino lives. Community events where children, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and friends are present ensure that each family member is supported and nurtured. Every year we start with Children's Day—celebrated in Mexico on April 30—and end with a Christmas celebration. In 1997, author Pat Mora encouraged the inclusion of literacy in the Children's Day celebration. So we now celebrate *Día de los Niños / Día de los Libros* (Day of the Children / Day of the Books).

There is an eight-year difference in average life expectancy between residents of our region's highest-income areas and those in the lowest-income areas. Overall, poorer health outcomes are tied to both poverty and lower levels of education (Helmstetter, Brower, and Egbert). Centro's annual health fair provides families with access to health resources, services, and social support.

We also celebrate *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead), a day to honor and remember departed loved ones. It is a joyful time of reunion, feasting, and remembrance for families. Death is accepted as a part of the cycle of life. Maintaining this ritual unites younger generations with parents and grandparents.

Finally, every December, Centro, Notre Dame alumni, Toys for Tots, and the Minnesota Twins Baseball Club sponsor an annual Christmas party where more than 700 adults and children—200 families—share the spirit of the season.

Another program in our Education Department is Adult Literacy. Adults of all ages finish their primary education or high school diploma so they can help their children with homework. The program is sponsored by the Mexican consulate in St. Paul, the Institute of Mexicans Abroad, and Centro. Every year, during the graduation ceremony, students share stories. One mother told us that in her village the school was one room with a dirt floor. Students didn't



Courtesy of Centro

have books and high school was not offered. When she came to the United States she was determined to finish her education, so she enrolled in the Adult Literacy Program. We were all so proud when she received her diploma from the Mexican Consul.

Parents who are learning English and did not attend school in the United States do not know the rules and regulations of public schools. In many Latin American villages there is no transportation to go to school; attendance is required but not enforced. Adapting to a new set of rules can prove difficult. In partnership with Hennepin County and the Minneapolis Public Schools, Centro's social worker helps children stay on track in school. We have a 99% rate of success.

Older children can join *Raíces* (Roots), a multifaceted youth development program that provides a space for Latino immigrant teens to cultivate a strong identity and develop multiple skills to lead a healthy, productive life. Program components are as follows:

- Education: Teens participate in Homework Club every Thursday and visit museums, theaters, and art exhibitions.
- Gender identity and sexuality: Sessions on identity and sexuality are held every Tuesday using theater, movies, or guest speakers to encourage teens to make healthy choices in their relationships.
- Folkloric dance and art: Learning dance, participating in photography workshops, or designing and painting a mural allows teens to discover talents and build self-esteem.
- Parent education workshops: Parents meet every Friday and Saturday to learn how to increase communication within the family; handle stress and anger; guide their child's behavior; and talk to a teenage son or daughter about sexuality, alcohol, and drugs.
- Mental health and medical referrals: Participants are referred to the *Aqui Para Ti* ("Here for You") East Lake Clinic and Planned Parenthood for medical services and screenings.

This holistic approach to youth development is intensive, but it ensures that parents and teens are engaged. At the end of each workshop, participants attend a graduation ceremony to recognize their efforts and achievements.

### **Siembra and Siembra Montessori**

The idea of Siembra started in 1974 with a group of parents who wanted to take English classes. Parents took turns caring for each other's children so they could study. From 1980 to 1997, half-day family classes were offered, with parents and children learning together at Centro's location on Nicollet Avenue, Minneapolis. In 1986, Centro opened a family literacy program in its new location at Chicago Avenue. In 1998, Tyrone Guzman opened Siembra Early Childhood Education Program, licensed by the Department of Human Services. The school explored using Montessori but determined it would be too expensive: Centro couldn't afford the training of teachers, much less acquiring the Montessori material. Still, quality was a priority, and by 2009 Siembra received accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Although Siembra was offering high-quality early childhood education, we knew Latino children in Minneapolis were statistically the least likely to be prepared to enter kindergarten. The impact of falling behind at an early age can lead to a host of future challenges, such as poor grades, delinquency, and low high school graduation rates. So in 2011, Centro and Montessori Center of Minnesota (MCM) staff began to explore starting a partnership.

With Montessori Partners Serving All Children, we could provide the highest-quality early learning environment; provide professional development for teaching staff; and engage families in parent education to promote school readiness, health, and nutrition. Our board, teachers, and families were delighted when the agreement was signed in March 2011.

The transition started in the summer of 2011, when teachers were trained as Montessori assistants. In 2012, parents visited the Montessori training center to learn about the Montessori philosophy. At the same time, the Siembra classroom was redesigned. As we were ready to open Siembra Montessori, we faced two challenges:

We needed a Montessori guide, and we needed to clean up after the building flooded. Hope Community, a local community development organization, hosted our program for two months while we worked on cleaning and restoring our agency's building. MCM referred us to Soly Cabrera, a trained Montessori guide originally from Ecuador. She is the perfect bilingual, bicultural guide for our families and children.

Siembra Montessori opened at Centro in October 2012. It has earned the highest quality ratings nationally. The program is accredited by NAEYC and has a four-star Parent Aware rating. Teachers provide dual-language education so that children learn English while retaining their cultural roots. The program supports development of the social and academic skills needed for K–12 and beyond. It serves children three to six years of age, year-round, providing convenient hours for working parents by opening at 7:30 a.m. and finishing at 6:00 p.m. All of Centro's wrap-around services are available to Siembra families so that each child can reach his or her full potential.

Siembra staff continue to receive technical assistance and support from MCM. In 2013, Siembra drafted its mission statement: "To support the academic and social development of Latino children living in and near Minneapolis by providing a high-quality, dual-language, Montessori learning environment that inspires children to become independent, responsible, and engaged learners and community members."

Siembra Montessori is significantly different from the previous Siembra preschool. Before Montessori, adults dominated the classroom environment. At Siembra Montessori, older children teach younger children; younger children are motivated to learn; and the program promotes leadership skills, responsibility, and compassion. Before Montessori, the classroom environment was very busy, and teachers assumed that children would be messy. Tables were covered with plastic to make cleaning easier. At Siembra Montessori, the environment promotes independence, social skills, confidence and self-esteem, physical and mental development, and respect and love for all living things. Children maintain a pristine environment and clean up when they are finished with their work.

Siembra Montessori provides conceptual tools for understanding the world, refinement of the senses, and indirect preparation for future work. Before Montessori, language was taught using multiple labels and by filling the environment with posters and pictures. Siembra Montessori allows children to develop spoken language, written language, and reading skills at their own pace. Before Montessori, children used the blocks area to play, but no mathematic concepts were intentionally taught. At Siembra Montessori, children learn numbers 1–10, the decimal system, four operations, counting, memorization, and concepts from concrete to abstract.

Siembra families speak Spanish at home. Seventy percent of Siembra households live at or below 200% of the federal poverty level (an annual income of \$46,100 for a family of four). Twenty percent live at or below 100% of the poverty level (\$23,050). And according to a United Way study, “Children who are born into poverty and spend multiple years living in poor families have worse adult outcomes than their counterparts in higher-income families: They are more likely to live in poverty as adults, more likely to drop out of high school, more likely to become a teen parent, and less likely to be consistently employed as an adult” (Greater Twin Cities United Way 3). However, Siembra is turning these statistics around for its families:

- 73% of Siembra four-year-olds are “proficient” on Work Sampling System research-based developmental indicators (2012-13 school year).
- 100% of Siembra three- and four-year-olds are “in process” or “proficient” in Work Sampling System research-based developmental indicators (2012-13 school year).
- Family engagement and parent satisfaction have increased since the transition to Montessori.
- 86% of parents demonstrated increased knowledge of the importance of school readiness (2012 survey).
- 98% of parents participated in parent-teacher conferences (2012–13 school year).

Here is a letter a parent wrote to us:

I want to take a few minutes to thank you for your efforts and daily work. You are always thinking about our community and our children's and families' health. Thank you for the services provided to my children Catherine and Justin. The idea of Montessori was fantastic! It is incredible Justin's progress. Teacher Soly has transformed our children into role models for the future. To the Siembra team, keep doing what you are doing. We will do any volunteer work you need us to do.

Thanks to our partners, we can provide scholarships and tuition assistance to 96% of Siembra children. The investment is high, and the challenges were many, but the results are tangible. Children and their families deserve the best environment and the best education. We believe Montessori is the answer.

Siembra Montessori partners:

- Montessori Partners Serving All Children
- United Way
- Cargill Foundation
- I. A. O'Shaughnessy Foundation
- Hiawatha Foundation
- WCA Foundation
- Sheltering Arms Foundation
- Minneapolis Rotary Club
- Minnesota Department of Education—Pathway II Scholarships
- Think Small
- The Blake School: Amigos

## POSTSCRIPT: MACAELLA'S STORY

Macaella joined the Cornerstone Montessori community (St. Paul, MN) as a toddler in September of 2009. Macaella and her mother commuted more than two hours a day for four years to get to and from Cornerstone, the demonstration school on the campus of the Montessori Center of Minnesota.

After years of looking for a job near her home, Macaella's mother found her ideal job this past summer. In 2013, Macaella's mom made the heartbreaking decision to enroll Macaella at an elementary school near their home. For her seventh birthday, Macaella wanted to give back to Cornerstone. She asked friends and family to donate money to Cornerstone rather than buy her gifts so that "more children can have a good school like Cornerstone." In October, she donated \$400 to the Montessori Center of Minnesota and Cornerstone.

Many times we find ourselves confronted with social questions that involve seemingly insoluble problems. I am convinced that our apparent inability to solve them stems from our failure to take into account one crucial factor—the human being when he is a child. (*Education and Peace* 48)

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