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NOVEMBER 2017

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A photograph of a man and a woman standing outdoors in front of a dense green hedge. The man, on the left, has a goatee and is wearing a blue jacket over a plaid shirt. The woman, on the right, has long curly hair and is wearing glasses, a green quilted vest, and a dark blue shirt. Both are smiling at the camera.

**Meet the Rellers and
their Busy Family!**

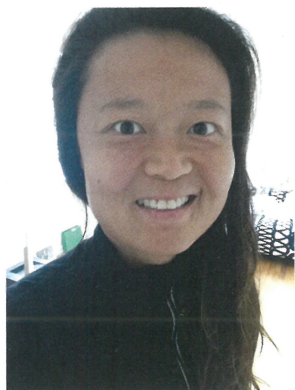


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Cover photo courtesy of Stephanie Reller

Montessori School of Duluth's New Head of School, Amy Shen, Invites You to Visit

Information and photos courtesy of Montessori School of Duluth.



The Montessori School of Duluth has a new Head of School, Amy Shen, who moved to Duluth this summer. “I’m excited to be the Head of School here,” Amy said. “This community supports education in so many ways, from the pre-K programs to colleges and universities, and I look forward to interacting with other educational leaders as we continue to grow and offer new programs at the Montessori School of Duluth.”

Amy specializes in curriculum design and independent school development. She has a commitment to a global mindset for students, and to guide that she has plenty of experience. Born and raised in China, she lived and was educated in six countries. As an educator, Amy is passionate about instilling in students a global ethos and building informed and responsible 21st Century global citizens—ideas central to Montessori education. Minnesota holds a special place in Amy’s heart, as she obtained her B.A. from Carleton College. She also earned a Master of Arts in Teaching from the School for International Training, and a Master of Education from Columbia University.

We wanted to get to know Amy and learn about her plans for the Montessori School of Duluth, so we had a few questions for her—her answers follow.

What are your plans for the Montessori School of Duluth in the coming year regarding curricula?

Montessori schools practice an unchanging curriculum called the Montessori pedagogy. My job is to continue to provide needed resources to support the educators (called Guides) at this school to carry out the highest quality Montessori education for children in the Duluth community.

As an avid independent school educator, I have visited close to 100 schools in my career, including a handful of Montessori Schools. I was impressed by the quality of Montessori education I witnessed during my interview here. It felt like I discovered a diamond in the rough. The Guides here are well trained, with years of experience, and carry out the Montessori education according to the vision of Dr. Maria Montessori (who developed a method of education based on the sensitive periods of learning in preschool and elementary children). At Montessori School of Duluth, the Guides are intentional,

present, loving, and very humble. They are keen to “do it right.” It is their mission to provide the most loving, uplifting, nurturing, and empowering experience possible for every child who comes here.

Do you have any needs for the school that would benefit from community support or involvement?

I do not know if much of the Duluth community knows that we exist, but that will change. As I said earlier, we are a diamond in the rough. My job is to make the good work that has been done here known to the Duluth community so that more children can benefit from it.

We welcome anyone interested to visit our school. We have an environmentally designed green campus tucked away on 313 Mygatt Ave. We have Parent Information Evenings open to the public (see the sidebar to this article), but you can also make an appointment to drop by and see what we have to offer. When you visit, pay attention to the experience of Montessori education and to how you feel while you are here in the building. I’m sure you’ll see why many children do not want to leave after the school day is over. Our close-knit parent community supports the school, making it a wonderful place to make friends and raise children together.

What about the Montessori perspectives on teaching and learning do you feel resonates with students and parents?

Throughout my studies and work experiences as a professional educator, I have always known about the Montessori pedagogy, because it is the gold standard for what schooling can look like when it is designed and practiced according to how human beings develop and human brains are built to function. For example, in my graduate Cognitive Science, Human Development and Curriculum Design classes, “The Montessori Method” was always used as the textbook example to demonstrate sound pedagogy.

In essence, the Montessori Method is not about fighting with children to make them learn. It is about getting out of the way of their curiosity and interest in learning. Montessori Guides are trained to be observant and sensitive to children as individuals. Only then can they provide each child with the resources s/he needs to explore and discover knowledge, and more importantly for children to discover how they learn and who they are. Montessori School of Duluth was strategically built to provide education for age 3 to Grade 6 children, capturing the prime period in the beginning of their lives to help them build a solid foundation for life.

When planning lessons, Guides set their teaching objectives on three levels: who (character development), how (life-long skills), and what (knowledge). A great teacher, however, spends most of her/his focus and attention on building the who.

Montessori Guides are such great teachers—they are trained to focus on building the person first, and then provide the space and resources for each child to blossom.

There is a saying that intrinsic motivation is the best teacher. Montessori Guides are trained to discern that initial spark in children's eyes and then skillfully guide children to follow through in their pursuits to satiate their curiosity. That sustained rapture witnessed in our children here on daily basis is the most powerful propelling force in the universe, for innovation, for creativity, and for producing the best work humanity is capable of. I like to ask people this: When was the last you were caught in such a rapture doing something that you forgot about time? Wasn't that a powerful experience? Imagine that a child starting at age 3 is prompted and guided to do that on daily basis. Can you image what that child is capable of doing while growing up? No wonder the founders of Google and Amazon are Montessori kids!

In addition to inspiring children to enjoy their own curiosity and learning, Montessori Guides help children discover their passion and nurture in them sustained focus. They also intentionally teach each child skills to handle setback, overcome obstacles, and confront difficulties with resilience, positive effort and optimism.

How many students and teachers do you have?

We currently have two Children's House Guides, one Elementary Guide, two Children's House Assistants and two Spanish Assistant Guides. In the Children's House we have 45 age 3-6 children, and 17 grade 1-6 students in the elementary division.

Do you have capabilities to bring in more students?

Yes, we are currently looking to enroll 10-20 additional grade 1-6 elementary students for the 2018-2019 school year.

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PARENT INFORMATION EVENINGS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

The Montessori School of Duluth invites you to attend their upcoming Parent Information Evenings (no reservation required). The meetings are open to the Montessori School of Duluth community and the public; childcare provided. Presenters are Montessori School of Duluth faculty and guests. The schedule follows; for more information call the school at 218-728-4600 or visit MontessoriDuluthMN.org

2017-2018 Parent Information Evenings

313 Mygatt Ave, Duluth, MN

All meetings are from 6:30-7:00pm

November 15, Wednesday

Completing the children's house experience.

December 13, Wednesday

Spanish learning showcase; Tips to support your children's second language learning at home; Successful ways to vacation/travel/have a merry holiday season with children.

January 10, Wednesday

AMI elementary education: How do I know my children are making progress? (AMI benefits, performance standards, assessment, transition to/from AMI).

February 13, Tuesday

Planning and affording your children's K-16 education journey.

March 14, Wednesday

Growing up in a diverse world.

May 16, Wednesday

Learning with learning differences.

CALLING ALL STUDENTS AND STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS!

Are you part of a student group that is raising funds for a cause, or perhaps a class trip? Are you putting on a theatrical performance? Are you studying for a spelling bee, or planning to go to college? What are your hobbies—perhaps planting a garden for pollinators or learning about the ships that come to Duluth? Or do you participate in a sport as an individual or part of a team? We'd love to feature you or your student group in an upcoming issue of the Congdon Neighbors magazine. Email mjones@bestversionmedia.com to let us know your interests or activities, and we'll be back in touch!



**Linda
Johnson**

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