

Montessori History in Juneau



Originally prepared by Chris Trostel; updated by Chris and others.

1907	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Douglas Women's/Ladies Club reports in the Treadwell newspaper that there "will be a luncheon and a talk on Dr. Montessori's Method of Education". <i>Thanks to Anne Fuller for locating this tidbit in the State archives.</i>
1920s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are reports that Montessori education began early in the past century in Juneau under the direction of the Sisters of Saint Ann. This coincides with a huge worldwide boom in Montessori, and the USA specifically, following Dr. Maria Montessori's celebrated accomplishments with children in tenements and children's "lunatic" asylums in Rome.
1970s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Sisters of Saint Ann Montessori program ended in the early 1970s.
Fall 1983	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Montessori trained teacher (Lauren Gallagher) living in Douglas opens a small Montessori home-based program with approximately 15 children. This generation of young adults is now raising children, some of whom are attending Montessori in Juneau.
1984	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lauren moves to Sitka and starts a Montessori school there. Mary Jane (Bauer) Tenney begins working with this Sitka program. Mary Jane later completes her AMI preschool Montessori training in Portland and moves to Juneau. • Catherine Fritz, Corine Geldhof, Dick Erman, and others form a non-profit, Juneau Montessori Center, to bring Montessori back to Juneau.
1985-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juneau Montessori Center opens in the Fall of 1986 in a Fritz Cove home where the homeowners, the Rousts, (parents of 2 students) donate space and remodel their home at their own cost to accommodate the school. This family offered space while permanent building solution was secured. Approximately 15 children attend with 1 teacher, Susan Brown.
1986-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juneau Montessori Center opens at the Harris Street Center (later demolished). The program nearly triples in size to 40 preschool children with 2 teachers Rainy Nycklemoe and Theresa Miller.
1991-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents pursue the first Montessori elementary program as a branch facility of Juneau Montessori Center. AMI Montessori preschool teacher, Malou de Wolf (Waters) Peabody teaches a K-1 class for one year until elementary trained teachers are secured. The classroom is housed in the basement of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church.
1992-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AMI Montessori elementary teachers, Chris & Rick Trostel and their daughter Molly, move to Juneau to teach at JMC. • Juneau Montessori Center secures the Mayflower Building in Douglas, which is owned by the City & Borough of Juneau and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. With the help of architect Catherine Fritz, and extensive parent volunteers, the building is renovated and brought back to its original use as a school. • There are 2 preschool classrooms (with Rainy and Malou), and the elementary program opens with 9 children. Chris and Rick job-share as elementary guides. • Malou leaves during 1992 school year and Jean Kresser, an AMI teacher from Seattle takes her place for one year. • Sharlyn (Berning) Smith receives her AMI Primary training in Portland at the Montessori Institute Northwest and returns to JMC to take over for Jean Kresser. • In May 1994 JMC discontinues the elementary program.
1994-95	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southeast Alaska Friends of Montessori (SEAFOM - 501.c3) is formed by a small group of elementary parents and elem. teachers, Chris and Rick Trostel; primary goal to establish an elementary program in the public schools. • The elem program triples in size (from private) and moves into the Juneau School District as its first "option" program. It is located in the Marie Drake facility. By having 28 children enrolled (17 of which were new to the District), an "Instructional Unit" is formed that brings \$61,000 of new funding to the District. Funds are used to rehire a (non-Montessori trained) teacher who was laid off due to budget cuts to work alongside Chris Trostel, who is paid from fund raising by parents as an "aide" in the classroom. • SEAFOM and the District jointly purchase materials for the classroom; many materials are also donated by the Trostels. Furnishings are provided by donation & made by parents. • Island Montessori School opens a Children's House on North Douglas owned and operated by AMI teachers Mary Jane (Bauer) Tenney & Sharlyn (Berning) Smith. • Juneau Montessori Center operates without AMI trained teachers and calls itself "Mayflower Montessori."

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The elementary program in the Marie Drake building is organized as an annex to Harborview School and is called “Harborview Montessori” (grades 1-4). It continues to expand with a large waitlist. Approximately 77 children are enrolled in Montessori programs in Juneau with 4 Montessori trained teachers. • Harborview principal, Drew Alexander welcomes and supports Montessori in the Juneau School District.
1996-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harborview Montessori splits to 2 classes (primary and intermediate). A second AMI trained (Canadian) teacher (Cameron ??) is hired, but due to immigration delays is not able to cross the border. The District hires AMI trained Montessori teacher, Rick Trostel at an instructional aide salary to teach the second class for the year. • SEAFOM & the District jointly purchase classroom materials for a second classroom; Trostels & friends donate others. • Discussions commence with District Superintendent regarding long-term expansion of the elementary program. • Second Harborview principal, Suzie Cary; classrooms move around within Drake to old art room and science lab with few renovations and furnishings. • Summer 1996 Canadian AMI elementary teacher Dominic Bradford visits Juneau, meets & stays with Trostel family.
1997-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEAFOM sponsors Erin ?? to AMI elementary training. She completes 1/2 the training and teachers 1/2 the year before leaving due to the birth of a child; does not return after maternity leave. A non-Montessori, long-term sub, Luann Speich, completes the year in the lower elementary class. There are approximately 85 children enrolled in Montessori programs throughout Juneau, and wait lists continue to grow. • Lupita Alvarez joins Juneau Montessori as executive director; JMC changes its name to Juneau Montessori School. • Jennifer Ryznar joins Juneau Montessori as first AMI preschool teacher at the school in 4 years.
1999-00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEAFOM sponsors Matt Dusenberry, a Juneau School District teacher to his AMI elementary Montessori training • The two elementary classrooms are combined and move again. One Montessori elementary teacher (Chris Trostel) teaches the 1st-6th grade classroom at Harborview. SEAFOM raises funds to pay for an AMI trained Montessori instructional aide Sharlyn Smith to provide additional needed support. • At the District’s suggestion, parents and teachers apply for a charter (for pre-school - 9th grade) from the Juneau School Board to provide relief for conditions that make it difficult or impossible to function as a magnet or school-within-a-school model. The school board fails to act on the application. Wait list continues to expand for all levels. • Third Harborview principal, Bob Dye. Another move of classrooms. Waitlists continue to grow. • Jennifer Ryznar leaves JMS in 2000.
2000-1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharlyn Smith rejoins JMS to teach a Children’s House classroom. • Andrea Stats is sponsored by JMS to AMI primary training. • The District allows the Montessori program some limited budgetary control and assigns a 0.25 Montessori trained specialist position (Rick Trostel) to the program to relieve pressure on Harborview’s staff and classrooms and to support the needs of the district-wide Montessori program. • Two elementary classrooms operate at Harborview; expansion (to third classroom) enrollment begins. Against the advice of Montessori staff and parents, the District places a new classroom at Auke Bay Elem, and enrolls students thru lottery. Auke Bay is not friendly with the idea, and a new Montessori teacher for that classroom cannot be found, so the plan is abandoned.
2001-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEAFOM sponsors Jennifer Ryznar to AMI elementary training. Expansion continues. • The first Montessori toddler program opens at Juneau Montessori with Sharlyn Smith who has also trained as an AMI Assistants to Infancy teacher. Andrea Stats returns as a teacher at JMS. • Mary Jane Tenney closes Island Montessori Children’s House and rejoins JMS as a primary/preschool teacher. • SEAFOM establishes a scholarship fund to support Kindergartners at JMS.
2002-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/SEAFOM fund raise to pay for a 3rd Montessori elem. teacher in a 1/2 time position in a large expanded lower el. classroom. This takes effect Fall 2003. Third elementary teacher (Jennifer Ryznar) begins as an instructional aide. • The elementary program moves from Marie Drake to the basement of Harborview (with no room for expansion to third classroom) due to other District demands on the Drake building space. • Parents and Montessori elem teachers begin actively pursuing expansion to the middle school. Many meetings with public and District occur. SEAFOM hires a trained Montessori elem. teacher, Dominic Bradford, sponsors him for Montessori Secondary certificate, secures site, enrolls 15 students, with waitlist of 5 more. Functions as a private school. • Spring, 2003 the District informs Montessori that the specialist position (Rick) has been eliminated. • Fourth Harborview principal, Kathi Yanamura.
2003-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEAFOM pays the District to maintain the Montessori specialist position for one year at Harborview Montessori. • Adolescent Montessori Program (AMP) opens in private facility (Arcticorp Bldg), grades 7- 8. Chris Trostel serves as Program Director. • Maren Thomas joins JMS as an AMI primary/preschool teacher.

- Expanded elementary program with waitlist for primary and elementary, toddler, preschool, and adolescent/middle school program. There are approximately 125 children enrolled in Montessori programs in Juneau. 48 are fully funded by public money. (15 adolescents with partial private funds + approx. 10 kindergarteners + all toddlers-4 year olds are privately funded).
- There are 4 Montessori elementary trained teachers (2.5 in the classrooms, 0.25 as a specialist – Rick Trostel teaches music, PE, Library for elementary), 3 Montessori preschool teachers (3 year olds- kindergarten), 1 Assistant to Infancy teacher (0-3 year olds), and 1 adolescent teacher (7-8th grade). Only two of these staff holds publicly funded positions.

2004-5

- Increased size of adolescent program and expanded to 9th grade. Dayna Weiler begins to work half time in the Adolescent Montessori Program (AMP). SEAFOM sponsors her to Montessori Secondary certificate.
- Adolescent school (7th, 8th, 9th grades) continues in private facility in a public-private partnership with Raven Cyberschool. Chris Trostel continues as Program Manager for AMP and Elementary.
- One lower el. classroom (Matt Dusenberry) is moved from Harborview to Glacier Valley when Harborview cites lack of available space for third classroom.
- Assist. Superintendent's office begins a year long Task Force on District-wide programs. Representation of programs is limited and not focused on Montessori's needs for support or interest in growth.
- At the request of the Assistant Superintendent's office – a second charter (for 3 year olds through 9th grade) application is pursued. Charter is passed at local level, but denied by the State Board of Education, citing transportation inequities. District says it will include adolescents in the public school for the following year.
- Ted Wilson is the Glacier Valley principal, Patty Newman is the Adolescent principal, Kathi Yanamura is the Harborview principal.

2005-6

- Montessori elementary and adolescent school assume the inclusive name, "Montessori Borealis"
- District provides Adolescent program space at Mendenhall River Community School (MRCS), in two dilapidated portables. SEAFOM pays for program specialists, not District.
- District moves all elementary classrooms for a "one-year temporary relocation" to Glacier Valley until one location for all programs is secured. Two classrooms are housed in portables, one inside the building. Upper el. bulges to 32 students in one classroom.
- Dominic Bradford takes extended leave due to illness, Fred Weiler, Dayna's husband, steps in as long-term support.
- Dominic leaves the school district at end of school year.
- Debbie Chalmers is hired for Adolescent program. SEAFOM sponsors her to her Montessori Secondary Certificate.
- Jennifer leaves due to birth of child; does not return.

2006-7

- Montessori parent, Cory Crossett is sponsored to AMI elementary training by SEAFOM.
- SEAFOM develops a proposed Facilities Plan, and presents to District. No action taken by District.

2007-8

- Cory is hired by the District for elementary classroom. Cory and Matt guide lower el., Chris upper el.
- District continues to hold elementary and adolescent school at two locations, without establishing an end date to this very difficult arrangement.

2008-9

- Elementary expands to 3.5 classrooms with a bulge of 35 at upper el. Chris Trostel continues to guide this classroom.
- Matt Dusenberry reduces teaching to half time. Mary Jane Tenney begins teaching younger el, with teaching certificate and AMI preschool training, but without elementary training.
- AMP increase enrollment slightly. Debbie Chalmers' adolescent position is partially funded by District and SEAFOM.
- SEAFOM continues to pay for program specialists for Adolescents (music with Rick Trostel, Spanish with Alison Talley, art, etc.).
- The process of securing "a home under one roof" for all classrooms continues with persistence from SEAFOM.
- Glacier Valley begins renovation program; Montessori elementary classrooms are displaced.

2009-10

- School Board acts to move Montessori elementary classrooms back to Drake as its permanent home. AMP remains at MRCS for one more year until Harborview renovation is complete. Elementary program is supervised by Harborview.
- Upper el. continues to expand to 42. Matt Dusenberry works part-time supporting upper elem. with Chris.
- AMP continues to expand at MRCS. Students, teachers, and community volunteers beautify by painting, landscaping; AMP tries to operate as independently as possible, given difficult site location. SEAFOM and District co-pay Debbie's teaching position. SEAFOM continues to pay for specialists (Spanish, Music, etc.).
- Search for another elementary teacher begins to accommodate enrollment demand.
- Funding for Montessori specialist(s) for elementary (Rick Trostel - music) is recaptured.

2010-11

- SEAFOM sponsors Mary Jane Tenney in AMI elementary training, to occur over 3 summers.
- Harborview returns to its newly renovated building. AMP moves to Drake. All classrooms are moved into proximity to one another on the second floor. The District places administrative offices and other programs in the Drake building.

- SEAFOM updates the proposed Facility Plan for Montessori Borealis, and presents to District.
- Montessori Borealis establishes a Site Council.
- Lupita Alvarez leaves JMS; Alenita Danner is hired as the Executive Director of JMS.
- Hillary Burgess is sponsored by JMS to receive her AMI Assistants to Infancy training.
- Stacy LaMascus volunteers periodically throughout the year, and substitute teaches at MB.
- District hires Annabel Rondeau, AMI elementary teacher, who relocates to Juneau in summer 2011.
- SEAFOM provides scholarship to principal Sarah Marino to attend Montessori Administrators conference.

2011-12

- Parents, teachers spend the summer moving, cleaning, and painting to ready the neglected Drake facility for children.
- Elementary splits into two older elem. classrooms now creating 4 total elem. classrooms, plus AMP. Cory and Chris guide the upper el. classrooms. Annabel and Mary Jane guide lower el. classrooms. Dayna and Debbie guide AMP.
- SEAFOM provides Montessori Borealis program assistance through a grant to Stacy LaMascus.
- SEAFOM continues to urge District to act on Facilities Issues, offering to bring planning consultant to Juneau. District declines consultant, but commits to a planning process that will result in renovation of the Drake building.
- Montessori Borealis has one principal, Sarah Marino, to oversee its program, but funding still allocated through elementary (HBV) and middle school (DZ).
- SEAFOM begins multi-year support of Sharlyn Smith to become AMI Trainer of Assistants to Infancy program.
- JMS sponsors Elise Sorum-Birk in AMI Primary Training.

2012-13

- Rebecca Hartwell is an MAT student with AMP for the first semester of the school year.
- Rick Trostel continues to work as a part-time specialist.
- Discussions with District about expansion to preschool and ninth grade continue. Strong desire expressed to establish enrollment at 175 minimum (grades K-8 or 9) to receive state funding as stand alone school.
- SEAFOM sponsors AMI elementary training for Stacy LaMascus.
- SEAFOM sponsors Rebecca Hartwell for AMI adolescent training during Summer 2013.
- SEAFOM sponsors Lupita Alvarez for Masters in Teaching Certificate, anticipating development of a public pre-school as part of Montessori Borealis.
- Chris and Rick Trostel relocate to Portland, Oregon during summer 2013.
- Debbie Chalmers retires in Spring 2013.
- JMS Exec Director, Alenita Danner resigns; Sharlyn Smith becomes JMS Director. Enrollment at JMS is approx. 70.
- Hillary Burgess becomes the lead teacher for the JMS Toddler Community.
- Rebecca Hartwell assists Montessori Borealis through a SEAFOM funded grant.

2013-14

- District hires Stacy LaMascus as upper elem teacher at Montessori Borealis, while she simultaneously completes her Masters of Teaching program to gain state teaching license.
- Rebecca Hartwell hired by District as second AMP teacher.
- District hires Amy Bibb as part time music specialist.
- Enrollment at Montessori Borealis is approximately 140 for grades 1-8, with continued waiting lists for enrollment.
- District begins Drake facility planning by hiring consultant architects and school planners.
- Principal Sarah Marino leaves Juneau; replaced by Principal Kristen Garot.
- JMS guide, Elise Sorum-Birk becomes one of the lead teachers in the Primary classroom.
- JMS sponsors Monica Daugherty in AMI Primary training to take over for Andrea Stats who is scheduled to retire at the end of 2013-14 school year.

Since 1994, Juneau’s Montessori community has envisioned, and worked toward fulfilling, these primary goals:

- (1) Create an authentic AMI public school Montessori model in Juneau. This means a publicly funded pre-school through adolescent program as recognized by the Association Montessori International (A.M.I.);
- (2) Create inclusive Montessori opportunities for all children in Juneau from preschool through adolescence (and beyond) to reflect the socio-economic and cultural community we live in; and
- (3) Bring all Montessori programs from infancy through adolescence onto one campus.
- (4) Engage families in Montessori education, and serve as a resource and foundation for healthy living in a peaceful world.