



2022 MPPI Advocacy Conference

All Times Eastern

Saturday, October 1st

Breakfast on your own

***Refreshments will be available all day Saturday including coffee, other beverages, and savory and sweet snacks. So, if you just need a cup o' Joe to get your day started, it will be ready and waiting for you.*

9-9:15 AM - Welcome and Opening Remarks

9:15-10:30 – Advocating for Montessori Education: Appreciating and Reflecting on Experiences

(facilitated by [Heather Gerker](#), MPPI Board member)

Our opening session will provide the opportunity for all attendees to reflect on their experiences in advocacy, consider the experiences of others, and support everyone in feeling grounded in our work together for the weekend and beyond. We will begin by sharing our stories and advocacy strategies as we set the stage for the conference. Then we will shift to setting goals and intentions that will carry us through the weekend and ultimately support long-term state advocacy plans for Montessori education.

10:30-11:00 Break

11:00-12:30 Responding to Anti-CRT/Anti LGBTQ Policy Efforts ([Ayize Sabater](#), Executive Director

AMI/USA and [Sara Bloomberg](#), Senior Montessori Instructional Coach for Bezos Academy)

Many state and local governments have proposed and enacted both anti-Critical Race Theory legislation and anti-LGBTQ+ legislation. MPPI is pleased to welcome Sara Bloomberg and Ayize Sabater for a conversation about two unfortunately hot topics in policy that can and will affect your schools. Hear about the kinds of restrictions these policies place on schools and teachers, how they harm children, families, and school staff, and how you can respond.

12:30-2:15– Lunch on your own (we will have reservations at a variety of area restaurants that you can sign up for. Or make your own before you come!)

2:15-3:30 – Keynote ([Patina Park](#), Director of Tribal State Relations Systems Implementation for the State of Minnesota)

For most people, the story of Native Americans was largely absent from our own education, and when present, it was whitewashed and full of stereotypes. Both state and federal level policies and their enforcement, or lack thereof, have continued to systematically mistreat, oppress, and erase Native peoples in this country. Deepen your knowledge of the concept of Tribal Sovereignty, the policies that have affected Native Americans (with a special focus on education policy), and look ahead to how your advocacy can include and amplify the needs of Indigenous peoples in your area.

3:30-4:00– Break

4:00-5:15– Montessori Advocacy and the Science of Reading ([Susan Zoll](#), Associate Professor and Co-Coordinator of the Early Childhood Education program at Rhode Island College, [Natasha Feinberg](#) EdD, Assistant Professor Rhode Island College and [Laura Saylor](#), Dean of The School of Education at Mount St. Joseph University)

As states seek to improve student literacy, many have already implemented policy requiring alignment with the Science of Reading and many more are considering it. Join the authors of the soon to be published *Powerful Literacy in Montessori Classrooms: Aligning Research and Practice* to understand what the Science of Reading actually is and how Montessori aligns, so that you can advocate from a strong knowledge base when your state implements policy requirements around the Science of Reading.

5:15-5:45 A Cautionary Tale (*Wendy Shenk-Evans, MPPI Executive Director*)

Watch legislative hearings in action and to see how the process can suddenly take a wrong turn when you stray from the fundamentals.

6:00-7:00 Reception

October 2nd

Breakfast on your own

*** The all-day coffee/snacks was only on Saturday. Coffee won't be available until the break so come prepared!*

9:00-10:15 Get a Grip! (On Research) ([Corey Borgman](#), Director of Education and Outreach for University of Virginia's Montessori Science program)

Recent research in both Montessori and non-Montessori environments support Montessori classroom practices and demonstrate positive outcomes. Further, they establish that Montessori can be culturally responsive and support children across race and income groups. In this session, Corey will present findings and implications from several recent studies that build the case for Montessori and can be used to support policy change.

10:15-10:30 Break

10:30-11:00 What's a Workforce Registry and Why Does It Matter? (*Denise Monnier, MPPI Director of Advocacy*)

Do you know what a workforce registry is or how it interacts with various education policies in your state? Denise Monnier will give an overview of workforce registries, how they relate to credential recognition and other systems such as QIS and public funding streams.

11:00-12:00 Reflection, Discussion and Closing

Keynote Note Speaker



Patina Park:

Patina Park, JD, is the director of Tribal State Relations Systems Implementation for the State of Minnesota, serving as a senior advisor to Governor Tim Walz, Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan, commissioners, and key state government staff in tribal-state policy and relations. Ms. Park facilitates active learning communities and executive coaching to create a safe space for deepening the proficiency of state leaders engaging in tribal-state relations. In partnership with state government and tribal leaders, she is building upon existing knowledge, policies, practices, and relationships to facilitate productive and respectful tribal-state relations. She has also held leadership positions with the Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center, Falmouth Institute, Minneapolis Division of Indian Work, and the Ho-Chunk Nation Department of Justice. Ms. Park is Mnicoujou Lakota, and her biological family comes from the Cheyenne River and Standing Rock Sioux Tribes; her adoptive family is Osage. Because of her own experiences as an adoptee, Ms. Park is passionate about issues related to Native American children and families and has led training sessions nationwide related to Federal Indian Law, ICWA, historical trauma, and implementing trauma-informed, culturally responsive programming.

Workshop Presenters / Facilitators



Sara Bloomberg

Sara Bloomberg, MA (they/them/theirs), is a Senior Montessori Instructional Coach for Bezos Academy. Sara lives on the unceded land of the Timucuan in what's now known as St Augustine. Sara is a co-founder of Blossoming Beyond the Binary, a consulting group that helps educational communities embrace and develop gender diverse practices and curricula that uplift and center LGBTQIA+ children, families, and educators. Sara co-wrote *Queering Your Culture: The importance of Gender Diversity and Inclusion in the Classroom* for Montessori Life. They co-wrote *Intentionally Inclusive: THE LGBTQIA+, Gender Diverse Montessori School* for the Montessori Collaborative World Review: The Montessori Roots of Social Justice (AMS/AMI) Sara has led workshops for the AMS TME, for the Montessori Alliance of Tennessee, BAMA and for MEPP. Sara also presents on this topic for various AMS affiliated TEP Programs in the US and across the globe. Sara was the head of the Early Childhood division at the St. Augustine Public Montessori School in Saint Augustine, Florida; founding director of Battery Park Montessori in New York City. Sara is thrilled to have this opportunity to be in community and learn from the fine folk at MPPI!



Corey Borgman, EdD

A Montessori educator, administrator, speaker, researcher, advocate, and consultant with 17 years of experience in the classroom and 12 in administration. I recently completed my EdD in Educational Leadership at UVA's School of Education & Human Development, with a focus on issues of equitable access to, and authentic implementation of, the Montessori method.



Heather Gerker

Heather is a Ph.D. student at the University of Cincinnati, where she is studying education policy. She also serves as a graduate assistant for the UC Action Research Center and the Mandel Teacher Educator Institute. Heather has taught in various educational settings, including teacher education and Montessori early childhood classrooms. Her current scholarship focuses on a critical analysis of the relationship between educational policy and practice, emphasizing Montessori Education in public schools. She is passionate about organizing, facilitating learning, and connecting with communities. Heather is deeply committed to creating an equitable world, centering and uplifting lived experiences of people in marginalized and minoritized communities and seeking to foster supportive and reflective learning environments.



Natasha Feinberg

Natasha Feinberg, Ed.D. is an assistant professor at Rhode Island College in the Elementary Education Department. She instructs preservice teachers in the areas of reading and writing as well as directs the Master's of Education in Reading program. Dr. Feinberg has 17 years of experience as a reading specialist/literacy coach in the R.I. public school system. With an Ed.D. in Curriculum Leadership from Northeastern University, Dr. Feinberg's area of expertise lies in the Science of Reading and teaching reading to all types of learners. She has worked extensively with Tier 2 and 3 literacy interventions identifying specific student literacy needs and matching evidence-based interventions and specific progress monitoring tools that address those needs. Her work focuses on supporting Data-Based Individualization and Data-Based Decision Making.



Ayize Sabater

Ayize Sabater is a dynamic entrepreneur, educational researcher, author and thirty year educational visionary. He earned his doctorate at Morgan State University in 2018. Dr. Ayize has co-founded several organizations, including a Montessori Public Charter school in D.C.. He received his a 2021 Montessori Core Principle and a 2012 Orientation (formerly know as Assistant) certificate and is an honors graduate of Morehouse and Wesley.

Ayize has been repeatedly featured as a Keynote speaker, has conducted presentations internationally and was a 2010 educational excellence award recipient, presented by First Lady Michelle Obama at the White House. Some of his published research articles are on: family engagement; culturally relevant pedagogy; Montessori education, especially for Black folx. Dr. Ayize has been widely featured (on TV, radio, in the NY Times, People & Emerge Magazines, Back Enterprise, etc). Ayize recently co-founded the [Black Montessori Educational Fund](#) and was appointed the 1st Black Executive Director of AMI/USA in November 2020.



Laura Saylor

Dr. Laura Saylor is Dean of The School of Education at Mount St. Joseph University. She earned her Ph.D. in Educational Studies with a concentration in Educational Policy and Higher Education with a focus in STEM education from The University of Cincinnati. Previously, she earned her Master of Education from Xavier University with a concentration in Montessori Education. Her 25 years of practical experience include teaching in inclusive and multi-age settings and serving as the Head of School for an independent

Montessori school. Laura is a frequent presenter at national conferences. Her research foci include the importance of learning and reading science in teacher preparation as well as assessing performance of pre-service teachers in clinical experiences. Dr. Saylor's interests also extend to best practices in educational assessment, and collaborative work between P-12 and Educator Preparation. Her recently published research includes mathematics discourse with pre-service teachers and the effects of teacher-centered mentorship.



Susan Zoll

Susan Zoll, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor and Co-Coordinator of the Early Childhood Education program at Rhode Island College. She has served in leadership roles on several Early Reading First projects (ERF 2004, 2006, 2009) funded by the U.S. Department of Education; and her work on the development of Personal Literacy Plans, a tool to share individualized assessment outcomes with teachers and families, was recognized by the Doing What Works initiative. Her dissertation, “From “at risk” to “at promise”: An Evaluation of an Early Reading First Project” speaks to the need for increased access to high-quality early language & literacy opportunities to prepare all children for reading success. Dr. Zoll is a Montessori educator (AMS) having served as a primary (3-6) educator, teacher trainer (Language curriculum), and Head of School. Her recent research includes historical analysis of early adopters of Montessori education (2017), the collaborative development of a Montessori logic model (2019), increased access to college courses for RI’s Spanish-speaking early childhood workforce (2020) and an overview of assessment and observation practices in Montessori classrooms (2023).