



A documentary film project

By [Jan Selby](#) and [Vina Kay](#)

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All Children Deserve Access to Quality Education

Building the Pink Tower (working title) is a documentary film project that aims to expand the education conversation to include the development and child-focused approach of Montessori education. Our changing world requires a learning approach that is proven, grounded in science, and flexible enough for children from all backgrounds to thrive with joy. The film will highlight schools that represent replicable models with measurable positive qualitative and quantitative outcomes that can inspire transformative change throughout the United States.

Through the power of storytelling, our film will invite viewers to enter a range of Montessori classrooms designed for toddlers through high school seniors to experience and be inspired by ideal learning in action. Viewers will hear from experts leading education innovation across the country and learn how Montessori education is leading innovation in a broader context, addressing issues relating to poverty, racial justice, and social justice.

Our film will show how children and their families are being transformed through Montessori education. Stories will highlight how Montessori has been particularly effective in communities of color and low-income communities, where other education models have presented barriers to learning. The stories will include public district, public charter, and independent schools that are catalysts for systemic change in Milwaukee, Dallas, St. Louis, Saint Paul, and a rural farm in Wisconsin.

We seek to shift how policy makers, teachers and parents think about schools and learning away from a traditional approach towards a child-centered approach that respects the innate ability of all children to learn. We will highlight schools where education is being reimagined so learning environments focus on the developmental needs of children. This is more than a documentary film; it is an initiative that will leverage stories to bring viewers and community leaders together, to spark informed conversations, and to influence the course of education reform already underway.

Montessori is Proven & Works Wonders

Montessori education helps every child become a well-rounded, self-directed, creative, collaborative problem-solver. Children in Montessori discover the joy of learning – and become independent lifelong learners.

Child development and education experts can now provide data that supports how Montessori, originally created 100 years ago for the poorest children in the slums of Rome, can help all children develop executive functioning, self-regulation, and concentration skills. Montessori children become successful adults and contributors to their communities.

Recognized worldwide, the Montessori philosophy is grounded in a scientific understanding of holistic child development. Each multi-age Montessori classroom is designed for hands-on learning - guided by teachers trained as classroom guides to interpret stages of intellectual and physical development.

Measuring Impact and Distribution Strategy

Our goal is to have all children have access to quality education. We believe that the stories in the film – and the incredible results – will serve as catalysts for action. With adequate funding, *Building the Pink Tower* (working title) will be completed in 2017.

We propose measuring the impact of the film with a preliminary baseline study that can be repeated at key milestones to measure awareness of Montessori and new initiatives that serve children who are often poorly served by our current education system.

Our national distribution strategy will incorporate multiple channels in a well-timed rollout, leveraging the more than 5000 Montessori Schools in the United States, film festivals, education innovation summits and events, social and racial justice summits and events, broadcast opportunities, and public screenings to inspire community engagement and inspire action. Marketing plans will promote key messages to target audiences who share our passion for systemic change and quality education for all.

The Filmmakers

Co-directors Jan Selby and Vina Kay are parents of children who attended Montessori schools. Jan is an EMMY® award-winning film producer, director and founder of [Quiet Island Films](#). Vina is the Executive Director of [Voices for Racial Justice](#), whose mission is to advance racial, cultural, social, and economic justice in Minnesota. They believe it is a moral imperative to support the development of children who are self-aware, happy, respectful, community-oriented, passionate life-long learners leading meaningful and productive lives.

Project Status

After several years of research, fundraising, and filming in schools across the United States, the film content is ready for editing. The talented post-production team is in place and is ready to begin the final phase of creating a beautiful and powerful documentary film. Our goal is to finish the film in 2017.

Partnership Opportunities

We are looking for financial partners and collaborators who share our passion for transforming education. Your support will help us change the conversation around education so that all children can reach their full potential.

Montessori Stories Highlighted in the Film

Lumin Education Dallas, Texas



At the core of the Lumin Education philosophy is a commitment to start early and engage parents. The program starts with home visits to parents of infants led by peer educators. Although the schools go through the third grade, Lumin has demonstrated the increased success of students who attend their schools by tracking them through high school graduation and beyond. As a result, gaps education are closing and graduation rates and college attendance are growing significantly.

Cornerstone Montessori School & Montessori Partners Serving All Children St. Paul, Minnesota



Cornerstone Montessori is situated next to a public housing development where families from all over the world are transitioning to new lives. Students are enjoying measurable, transformative outcomes while creating a diverse community. The Montessori Center of Minnesota, adjacent to the school, offers AMI teacher-training programs. Their Montessori Partners Serving all Children program has been instrumental in the growth of many innovative Montessori schools. Their mission is to be a catalyst for creating culturally grounded Montessori opportunities in communities that have not had access to high-quality education in the past.

City Garden Montessori School St. Louis, Missouri



City Garden charter school demonstrates how a community's intentional commitment to fighting racism intersects with its Montessori philosophy, transforming students, families, teachers, and the community beyond the school. Children and families work with school staff to practice both the racial healing that is necessary to address historic oppression and the activism to build a more just community.

Lake Country School / Land School Minneapolis, Minnesota, Glenwood City, Wisconsin



The Lake Country junior high program is highly regarded as a model for applying the Montessori methodology to the developmental needs of the adolescent and nurturing their nascent adulthood. Nature-based, character-building experiences allow the discovery of themselves as community oriented, independent young adults with greater self-awareness of their individual styles of leadership.

Milwaukee Public Schools - Montessori Programs Milwaukee, Wisconsin



The history, growth and success of public Montessori schools in Milwaukee demonstrate how the availability of high-level teacher training (both AMI and AMS), internal school district support, and a strong parent and educator advocacy community have come together to make widespread Montessori education possible. This story will explore the policy strategies that make public Montessori successful in a district setting, and offer lessons on overcoming policy challenges so that other communities can make Montessori education available to all children.

Our Wonderful Advisors

Kathleen Coskran *Former Head of Lake Country School, Author*



In 1995, Kathleen became head of Lake Country School. Under her direction, the school bought a 180-acre farm and created the Lake Country Land School to incorporate a residential program for adolescents into the standard curriculum of the school. She is the recipient of numerous artists' fellowships and residencies including a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship and a Bush Artist's Fellowship.

Jacqueline Cossentino *Senior Associate and Director of Research, National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector*



Jackie's Montessori career began as a parent, and quickly evolved into researcher and administrator, as well as university professor. An ethnographer by training, since 2001 Jackie has drawn from her direct experience as head of an independent Montessori school and principal of a large, urban public Montessori school to produce an internationally recognized body of scholarship on Montessori education. She serves on the boards of Montessori Northwest and the Montessori Charter

Management Organization.

Steve Hughes *PhD, LP, ABPdN, Director, Center for Research on Developmental Education*



Steve is Director of The Center for Research on Developmental Education, and current President of the American Academy of Pediatric Neuropsychology. He also serves as Chair of the Association Montessori Internationale Global Research Committee, and is a member of the faculty at the Maria Montessori Institute in London. Dr. Hughes is an advocate for activity-based, developmental approaches to education, and is a frequent speaker and consultant to Montessori education

organizations around the world.

Molly O'Shaughnessy *Executive Director and Director of Primary Training, Montessori Center of Minnesota*



Molly is an Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) trainer, lecturer, consultant and speaker. Since 1996, she has served as Executive Director and Director of Training at the Montessori Training Center of Minnesota (MTCM). She earned her AMI Primary diploma from the MTCM in 1976 and holds an M.Ed. from Loyola University Maryland. She serves on the board of the AMI in Amsterdam, NAMTA (North American Montessori Teachers' Association), and is a member of the AMI Trainers Group. Ms. O'Shaughnessy has dedicated her life to education and children.

Stephanie Miller *Executive Director, Trust for Learning*



Stephanie is the Executive Director of Trust for Learning whose mission is to make ideal learning real for all children, regardless of their socioeconomic status. She has been working in the field of strategic philanthropy for twenty years, focusing on collaborative grantmaking in education and community development. Stephanie founded a national network of community literacy education organizations that served marginalized communities across the country. Prior to her work with Trust for Learning, Stephanie maintained a philanthropic advising practice, advising a wide range of private grantmakers.

Joyce S. Pickering *HumD, MA, SLP/CCC, CALT, QI, AMS/EC, Executive Director Emeritus, Shelton School and Evaluation Center*



Joyce is a forty-year Montessorian, speech and hearing pathologist, and learning disabilities specialist. Currently, Joyce is Executive Director Emerita of Shelton School & Evaluation Center in Dallas, Texas, the world's largest private school for children with learning differences. Under Joyce's tenure as executive director (1990–2010), Shelton saw significant growth and development, including an expansion of the application of the Montessori philosophy and practice and, in 2009, the launching of Shelton Montessori Teacher Education Center. Joyce is the 2013 Living Legacy Recipient for American Montessori Society as well as President of AMS Board of Directors.

Tim Seldin *President, Montessori Foundation, Chair, International Montessori Council*



Tim's forty years of experience in Montessori education includes twenty-two years as Headmaster of the Barrie School in Silver Spring, Maryland. He has also served as the Director of the Institute for Advanced Montessori Studies and as Head of the New Gate School in Sarasota, Florida. He earned his Montessori certification from the American Montessori Society. Tim is the author of several books on Montessori Education.

Lucy Swift *Film Development & Distribution Consultant*



Lucy is a community connector, leadership mentor and strategic planning partner. As former Vice President of Minnesota productions and partnerships for Twin Cities PBS, she oversaw all broadcast and multi-media initiatives associated with local partnership and grant-based productions. She currently participates in multiple statewide collective impact endeavors including Graduation Minnesota, focused on eliminating the graduation rate disparities gap.

