

Faculty Summer Trainings

The summer is a time for teachers to rest and rejuvenate. It is also often a time for thoughtful professional development, feeling less rushed than during the school year. Many of our teachers and staff were involved in different trainings and Professional Development over the summer. Below are a few highlights of information learned that will be brought back to school.

Sarah Palacios of the Toddler Program did the first summer of her Montessori training to become a credentialed Infant/Toddler Montessori teacher! She attended the Montessori Training Center Northeast and spent nine weeks of the summer in Hartford. She has already begun to apply what she has learned to the set-up of the Toddler Room and is looking forward to working with the children with this new knowledge in mind!

Mariam Diallo and Cheryl Matthews of the Birch Room took the training on Act 1 for the prevention and reporting of child sexual abuse. They also took a class titled “Never Too Early: Worried, Wild and Wonderful”. This four-hour class discussed how to identify social and emotional themes in children’s books and use the books to support learning in the classroom.

Jonathan Sellers of the Willow Room started on his masters degree with the [Montessori Integrative Education Program](#) through Endicott College. This program is designed for credentialed Montessori teachers who are interested in further exploring their understanding of applying Montessori philosophy.

Kerstin Kjellberg, Patrick Burke, Amelia Fontein, Jen Hed, and Tom Griffith (all from the elementary program) attended a four day with [Responsive Classroom training](#). They took part in two different sessions of the “Elementary Core Course” that focused on community building, classroom management, and social/emotional learning in elementary classrooms. While Responsive Classroom is not specifically “Montessori”, it is one of the many examples of Montessori principles being adopted more generally. The training reinforced many practices already in place in our elementary programs and provided ideas for many more to implement in the coming year, especially during these first weeks for school when so much classroom culture is being set.

Tom Griffith and Jen Hed of the Upper Elementary, along with Kegan Refalo and Amber Arnold of the administrative staff, attended a three-day course on [Presenting Abenaki Culture in the Classroom](#). We will be bringing what they learned into the Upper Elementary curriculum as well as to many of our school-wide considerations and practices.

Nora Gordon of the Middle School took an insightful training on teaching climate change, which became an all staff read for the beginning of the year, [“Climate Change Meets Ecophobia” by David Sobel](#). A note on the training from Nora:

This August, I attended the week-long Summer Institute on Energy and Climate Change put on by the Vermont Energy Education Program. This terrific organization works throughout Vermont (and now in New Hampshire, too) to get kids and schools working on climate issues related to electrical production, home efficiency, and transportation. VEEP educators do in-school residencies, work one-on-one helping teachers develop curriculum, and provide trainings for educators. At the Summer Institute, I joined eleven other K-12 educators as we unpacked VEEP’s project-based approach to learning and built connections between key energy concepts and our own curriculums. I am very excited to bring many of these activities and investigations back to the Middle School for our year-long focus on climate change. In fact, I was so excited that I brought back six boxes of science materials on loan from VEEP, including

infrared thermometers and watt meters. I encourage anyone who is interested in Vermont's carbon footprint to check out VEEP's [website](#).

Tamara Mount took the Basic Specialized Child Care Training that is part of the requirements to work with children who are under protective services with the Department for Children and Families. Several staff have taken the class and the director needs to have taken it within the past five years. It was a great review of the support agencies in place and how to best meet the needs of children and families.

All of the staff participate in training sessions and meetings during the In-Service Days at the end of summer. This year included a half-day training session on Gender and Sexuality Diversity with a speaker from Northampton, Mass. [Jennifer Bryan](#) travels all around the country to give these workshops and was pleased to be able to stay local! She is very familiar with Montessori schools and noted that she was giving us not tools to put in our “toolbox”, but materials to put in our “baskets”!

We also had a half-day **First Aid Training**. (We alternate years between First Aid and CPR to keep all staff current with those certifications.) This year we used an instructor who focusses on [wilderness first aid](#). She was able to give us very relevant and applicable training addressing bleeding, head trauma, frostbite, heat stroke, EpiPens, ticks, and more. She was an unusually engaging trainer and had a fun teaching tool for learning the Heimlich maneuver!

Staff also appreciated time taken by two board members to help employees better understand and utilize a couple of the employee benefits offered by Hilltop Montessori School. Travis Shine came in to speak to folks about the TIAA/CREF retirement fund and Vanessa Long covered AFLAC benefits. We feel very fortunate to have these benefits and to have board members so dedicated to Hilltop staff benefitting from them!