

Organizing a Glass Classroom Event

Notes from the 2013 International Montessori Congress



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27TH INTERNATIONAL MONTESSORI CONGRESS





The 2013 International Montessori Congress and Montessori Northwest presented “Montessori in the Square,” a public glass classroom event held in the heart of downtown Portland.

This celebration of Montessori education featured three large interactive classrooms: Assistants to Infancy (ages 0-3), Primary (3-6), and Elementary (6-12), and included activities for children and information for parents. Trainers and guides were on hand to assist viewers with questions.

Thousands of people passed by the model classrooms to watch the children work in their beautifully prepared environments, and many were in disbelief that even in such a public venue children were focused and working as normal!

The inspiration for this event came from Dr. Montessori herself. During her second visit to the U.S. in 1915, Montessori was invited to participate in the World's Fair Panama-Pacific International Exhibition in San Francisco. She set up a classroom at the Exposition, where spectators watched twenty-one children, all new to the Montessori Method, behind a glass wall for four months in what has since become known as “The Glass Classroom.”

Because of the interest in this component of the 2013 International Montessori Congress, and its great success, Congress organizers have assembled this handbook to provide readers with valuable information they can use to organize a similar event of their own.



While the specific details of your glass classroom event will differ from what was held during the International Montessori Congress, the basic components and timelines are likely to be quite similar.

One Year Before the Event

- Secure location, sign contracts/paperwork and pay applicable fees
- Outline the “major players” in the event; source of children, guides, materials, etc.
- Create and distribute initial marketing; name and logo
- Develop goals for the event

Six Months Before the Event

- Review goal document for the event. Is it still realistic?
- Contact all schools involved, begin meeting to discuss event and rally support

Three Months Before the Event

- Set floor plan for event
- Begin designing signage and handouts
- Confirm students and teachers, allowing schools to relay details to parents
- Begin advertising event online and via other electronic resources

Two Months Before the Event

- Secure moving truck, if needed
- Establish daily timeline
- Solidify signage and literature
- Identify volunteer positions and shifts, including photographer, and begin securing volunteers
- Press releases begin going out, sent regularly until event start

One Month Before the Event

- Pedagogical teams determine which materials will be brought to event
- Map the floor plan, indicating where each item will be placed
- Finalize signage, order banners and other large-scale images
- Distribute printed posters
- Obtain model release forms

One Week Before the Event

- Begin packaging materials for safe and easy transport to event
- Confirm shifts with volunteers, vehicle rentals, and location

Day Before the Event

- Box, label, and load all materials into truck

Day of the Event

- Follow daily timetable for set-up, implementation, and breakdown

Post-Event

- Unpacking
- Thank you notes / volunteer appreciation gathering

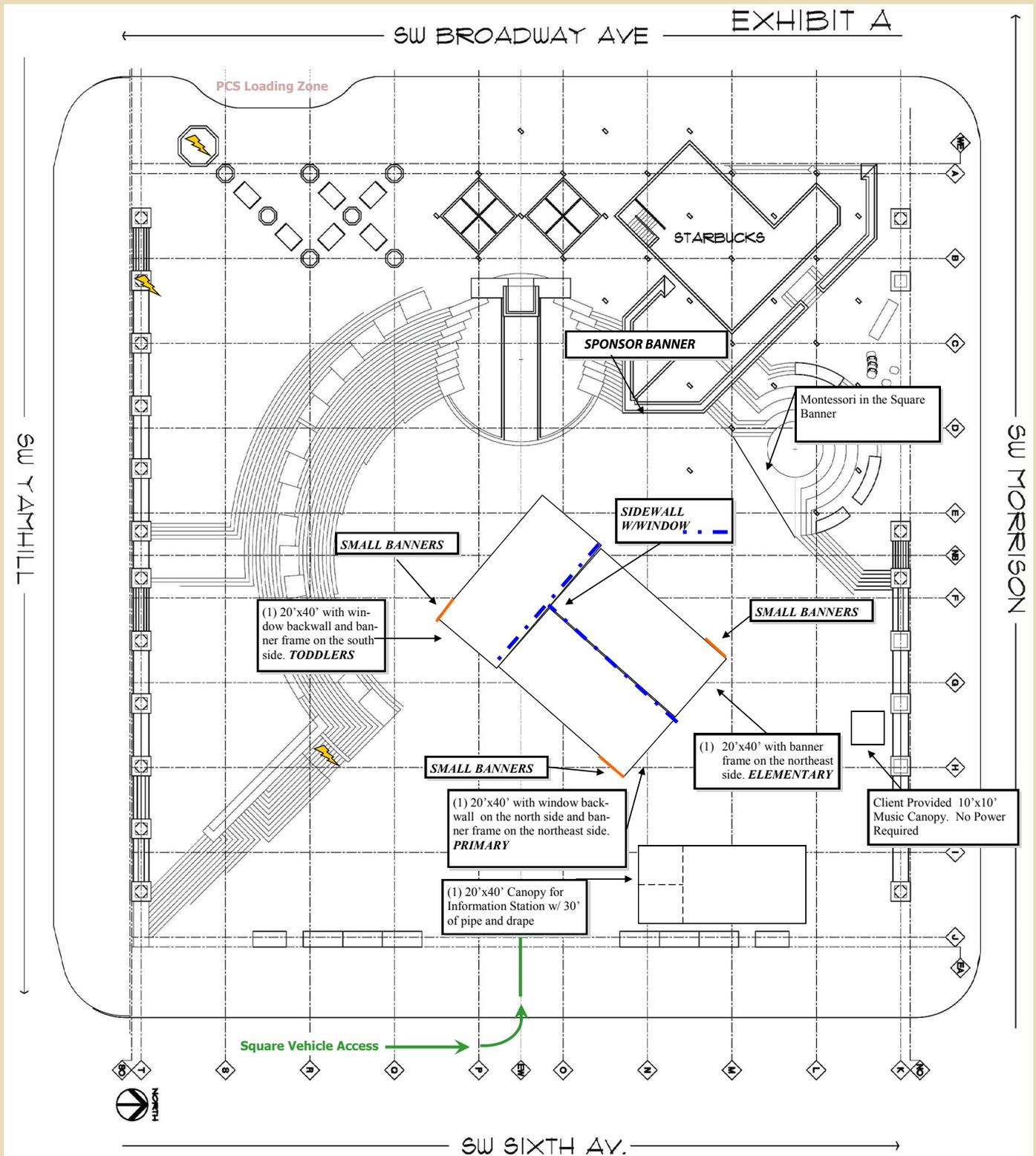
Close attention should be paid to maximize the visibility of your spaces, while also allowing for people to move about unobstructed.

Montessori in the Square was held under five tents:

1 20x40' tent for each learning environment

1 20x20' tent for additional information, resources, and children's activities

1 10x10' tent for musical performances



An event like the glass classroom is only as successful as the number of people that see and hear about it, either in person or in the media.

In order to promote Montessori in the Square, organizers sent out regular press releases to newspapers, radio, and television stations. A location with ample existing foot-traffic was chosen, knowing that doing so would guarantee passers-by. Large canvas signs were printed to be seen from a distance. Securing involvement from many people and organizations will attract more attendees.

sample press release



Contact: Jennifer Davidson
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MONTESSORI IN THE SQUARE

Witness Montessori Classrooms in Pioneer Courthouse Square

The public at large and all those attending the [27th International Montessori Congress](#) in Portland, Oregon this summer are invited to view a very rare event in the history of Montessori education. For those who have wondered what happens inside a Montessori classroom, the mystery behind that wonder will soon be revealed. Three open-air classrooms ranging in age from toddlers through elementary, will carry on a "typical" school day with children and teachers in Pioneer Courthouse Square from 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM on Wednesday, July 31. Everybody is welcome to sit and view a child doing hand washing while another uses the golden beads. What are the golden beads? The answer is waiting for all who are curious this summer in Portland, Oregon.

The [27th International Montessori Congress](#) happens from July 31-August 3, 2013 at the Oregon Convention Center. Thousands of the world's Montessorians, early childhood educators and advocates, and members of the public will experience four days of international speakers, exhibitions, and social gatherings aimed at furthering the cause of education for young children. *This is the first stateside Congress in nearly 40 years, and it happens next week here in Portland!*

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For information about Montessori In The Square and the [27th International Montessori Congress](#) contact either:

Jennifer Davidson, 503.963.8992, jennifer@montessori-nw.org

Jeffrey Friedman, 503.963.8992, jeff@montessori-nw.org

WHAT: Montessori In The Square

WHEN: Wednesday, July 31, 2012 ... 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM

WHERE: Pioneer Courthouse Square, Downtown Portland

[Montessori Northwest](#) – 623 SE Grand Ave – Portland, Oregon USA – 97214
503.963.8992 – info@MontessoriCongress.org

Create high-quality handouts for attendees to take with them. These promotional items should emphasize your event's goals and direct viewers where to go for additional information.

Handouts distributed at Montessori in the Square:

- Event postcard
- Directory listing of local schools
- Advertisements for upcoming events at the Training Center
- Parenting materials downloaded from **AidToLife.org**

This event postcard that was created for Montessori in the Square.

MONTESSORI

ABOUT MONTESSORI

Montessori is a method of education that is based on self-directed activity, hands-on learning, and collaborative play.

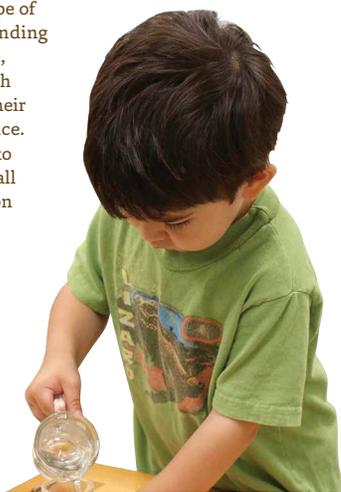
In Montessori classrooms children make creative choices in their learning, while the classroom and the teacher offer age-appropriate activities to guide the process. Children work in groups and individually to discover and explore knowledge of the world and to develop to their maximum potential.

Montessori classrooms are beautifully crafted environments designed to meet the needs of children in a specific age range.

Dr. Maria Montessori discovered that experiential learning in this type of classroom led to a deeper understanding of language, mathematics, science, music, social interactions, and much more. Children can learn through their own experience and at their own pace. They can respond at any moment to the natural curiosities that exist in all humans and build a solid foundation for life-long learning.

Childhood has shown me that all humanity is one.

—Maria Montessori



MONTESSORI NORTHWEST

Montessori Northwest, located in SE Portland, provides AMI Montessori teacher training at the Assistants to Infancy (ages 0 - 3), Primary (ages 3 - 6), and Elementary (ages 6 - 12) levels, and serves as a hub of activity within the Montessori community. We also offer parent education, continuing education workshops, community education, and personalized staff development for Montessori professionals.

27TH INTERNATIONAL MONTESSORI CONGRESS

Dr. Maria Montessori established the International Montessori Congress in 1929 to raise the awareness and understanding of Montessori education. Since then, twenty-five additional Congresses

have followed around the world, with one being held approximately every four years. It has been nearly forty years since the Congress was last held in the United States and we look forward to hosting this international Montessori event here in our home country.

The 27th International Montessori Congress, "Montessori: Guided by Nature," is going on right now, July 31 – August 3, 2013 at the Oregon Convention Center.

MONTESSORI IN THE SQUARE

As part of the International Montessori Congress, three classrooms have been set up in the middle of Pioneer Square. See for yourself how unique and beautiful Montessori learning environments are. We encourage you to watch the children working, ask questions, and learn for yourself what makes Montessori education so special. We're glad you're here!



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MONTESSORI



Montessori Northwest
622 SE Grand, Portland, OR 97214
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WWW.MONTESSORI-NW.ORG

Create high-quality signage to attract and inform attendees. Signs should be visible from at least ten feet away to allow for maximum exposure and appeal. Keep your signs general enough that they can be used for future glass classroom events or displayed elsewhere.

Signs on display at Montessori in the Square included:

- three 5'x9' canvas banners, describing each level of learning
- three 5'x9' canvas banners, with name of each classroom level
- one 5'x9' canvas banner--"What is Montessori?"
- one 5'x9' canvas banner--"History of Montessori"
- one 20'x4' canvas banner with the name of the event + sponsors

Some examples of the signage used for Montessori in the Square

MONTESSORI

The History of Montessori

DR. MARIA MONTESSORI
(1870-1952) was an Italian physician and anthropologist who devoted her life to understanding how children develop socially, intellectually, physically, and spiritually. By carefully observing children all over the world, she discovered universal patterns of development that are found in all children regardless of their culture or the era in which they live. Over the next several decades she crafted an educational method in response to her observations.

In 1915 Dr. Montessori opened a "Glass Classroom" at the Panama Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco so visitors could see the Montessori system in action. With the same purpose of bringing Montessori to you, today we relive that history with classrooms for toddlers, children ages 3-6 and elementary children ages 6-12.











MONTESSORI

What is Montessori?

"MONTESSORI IS a comprehensive approach to education based on the observation of children's developmental needs and tendencies."
www.montessori-namta.org

The goal of a Montessori classroom is to provide the ideal environment for each child to grow intellectually and emotionally. Children can learn through their own experience and at their own pace. They can respond at any moment to the natural curiosities that exist in all humans and build a solid foundation for life-long learning.
www.montessori-nw.org

Each classroom is equipped to meet the particular academic and social needs of a different age range of children, but some elements remain the same throughout the child's experience.

Every Montessori classroom:

- Contains beautiful materials for the child to manipulate and a trained adult to help guide the child's activities.
- Provides the opportunity to exercise and develop free choice and independence.
- Helps foster within the child an awareness and appreciation of their collaborative role in both the classroom and their community.



MONTESSORI

Primary Classroom

THE MONTESSORI PRIMARY classroom serves children aged three to six years. Dr. Montessori observed that children of this age prefer individual work in the company of others. This is characterized by focused concentration when manipulating materials. The child effortlessly absorbs all aspects of the environment and surrounding culture. This helps craft the emerging personality whose foundations set the stage for later social, emotional, and intellectual exploration.



Goals of the Primary Environment:

- Foster the growth of independence, task persistence, and self-regulation
- Support social development through respectful, clear communication and safe, natural consequences
- Provide a large variety of activities for the control and coordination of movement, refinement of sensory perception, and development of both literacy and mathematical understanding
- Offer opportunities for imaginative exploration leading to confident, creative self-expression





MONTESSORI IN THE SQUARE

"Get inspired by Montessori"

If you plan to record video footage, take photos, or broadcast your event in any way you *must* have everyone involved sign a release waiver to avoid possible legal action.

The children and adults involved with your glass classroom are under your care. Considerations like insurance liability, tripping hazards, the safety of your environments, weather/temperature, food needs, allergies, bathroom breaks, and duration of stay in the classrooms all need to be thought out carefully.

Below is an example of a Model Release for Minors Form. There are many online sources to provide similar documents. It is strongly recommended to have all paperwork reviewed by a lawyer.



Model Release for Minors

For valuable consideration I hereby give to Montessori Northwest the absolute and irrevocable right and permission with respect to the photographs that its staff members have taken of my minor child in which he/she may be included with others:

- a) To copyright the same in the photographer's name or any other name that he/she may select, and
- b) To use, re-use, publish and re-publish the same in whole or in part, separately or in conjunction with other photographs, in any medium now or hereafter known, and for the purpose of illustration, promotion or marketing.

I understand that Montessori Northwest may not sell or trade these photographs to any other person, company or entity, and that these photos will be used solely by Montessori Northwest.

I understand that Montessori Northwest may use my child's first name in captions or descriptions regarding the content of the photograph but will in no other way identify my child.

I understand that Montessori Northwest will make all efforts to use only photographs that depict my child in a neutral or positive manner.

I hereby release and discharge photographer from all and any claims and demands ensuing from or in connection with the use of the photographs, including any and all claims for libel and invasion of privacy.

This authorization and release shall inure to the benefit of the legal representatives, licensees and assigns of the photographer as well as the person(s) for whom he/she took the photographs.

I have read the foregoing and fully understand the contents hereof. I represent that I am the parent or guardian of the above named model. For value received, I hereby consent to the foregoing on his/her behalf.

Dated: _____

Minor's Name: _____

Parent or Guardian Name: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Parent's Email Address: _____

622 SE Grand Ave. Portland, OR 97214 | P (503) 963-8992 MONTESSORI-NW.ORG

Updated 7/10/2013 ahh

Outline the goals of your glass classroom event. Is it to boost school enrollment, or perhaps to encourage teacher training? Or maybe you hope to draw the attention of policy-makers?

The desired outcomes of your event will determine the tone and content of your signage and volunteer interactions. All volunteers in Portland's event received a list of relevant talking points, giving them the tools needed to explain the history of the glass classroom, summarize Montessori education, describe the local training center, discuss the conference, and to engage viewers in upcoming activities.

Sample Media Talking Points For Montessori in the Square

Who was Dr. Maria Montessori

- Dr. Maria Montessori was one of the first female doctors in Italy
- She had a strong interest in human development
- She observed and worked with children in a variety of settings
- In 1907 she had the opportunity to design an unconventional classroom based on her observations
- She provided a children's environment with interesting learning activities
- Children were allowed to act freely within it as long as an individual's actions did not negatively affect the larger group

About Montessori Schools

- Measurably better social and academic skills
- Greater intrinsic motivation
- Classrooms are carefully prepared learning environments
- Learning is student-centered
- Children learn through hands-on work, experience, and discovery
- Mixed aged groups foster peer learning and leadership
- Students learn at their own pace and cover the full curriculum
- This method was designed to build on children's natural curiosity
- Children have the opportunity to practice positive social interactions
- Montessori outcomes include children with different learning styles and abilities

International Montessori Congress

- This is the 27th International Montessori Congress
- Dr. Montessori herself started this tradition in 1929
- A Congress is held approximately every 4 years
- Most recent Congresses were in India, Australia, France, and Mexico
- It has been more than 40 years since the last Congress in the US (1972, Palo Alto)

Actions

- Sign up to join the Montessori Northwest mailing list
- Consider Montessori for your child
- Visit www.aidtolife.org to learn more about supporting human development in the home
- Share Aid to Life with new parents
- Join MNW's advocacy effort to make Montessori available to more families
- Attend "Discover Montessori" at MNW this Saturday

Thank you to the people and organizations that helped make Montessori in the Square a success.

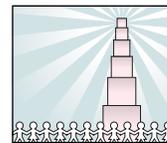
MONTESSORI IN THE SQUARE MADE POSSIBLE BY:



Nienhuis
MONTESSORI



FEATURING STUDENTS FROM:



tiny revolution
montessori and suzuki school

For additional information on the 27th International Montessori Congress, or to see photos from Montessori in the Square, please visit:

www.montessoricongress.org/program/montessori-in-the-square/



The International Montessori Congress is a tradition maintained by the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI), and remains open to anyone interested in Montessori education. The 2013 Congress was unique with its broad support from so many national and local Montessori membership organizations, as well as endorsements from educational foundations, universities, and local schools. The Congress was organized and administrated by Montessori Northwest, formerly the Montessori Institute Northwest, Portland's AMI teacher training center.