

## Montessori School celebrates peace bench dedication

By Stephanie Kim - Friday, Dec. 15, 2017.



**Image 1 of 2** - Photo: Stephanie Kim / Hearst Connecticut Media  
Alisa Shatilo holds up a drawing at the peace bench dedication at The Montessori School in Wilton.



**Image 2 of 2** - Photo: Stephanie Kim / Hearst Connecticut Media  
Lisa Potter, head of The Montessori School in Wilton, helps a student cut the ribbon of the school's new peace bench on Friday, Dec. 15, 2017.

# THE HOUR

WILTON — At the Montessori School in Wilton, a peacekeeper is someone who has an open mind, a thoughtful heart and a selfless attitude. The school has a rotating committee of peacekeepers selected from each classroom, ranging from 3 to 12 years of age. Together, they brainstorm ideas, create a strategy and present their completed proposal to peers and adults.

“Being a peacekeeper is very important because you get to learn what’s better or not and you get to help other people,” Alisa Shatilo, 5, said. “Also, a peacekeeper is always helpful and caring.”

Shatilo and her fellow peacekeepers recently unveiled their latest project: a peace bench on the school’s front yard where students can rest, visit a friend or invite another to play. Students are familiar with this purpose, as peace benches are found at the school’s playgrounds.

The school held a dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremony on Friday, Dec. 15, with music and remarks from the committee and the school’s director, Lisa Potter.

“This is a very special time. This is the dedication of our peace bench,” Potter told dozens of students, staff parents who gathered that afternoon at 34 Whipple Road. “This is a culmination of many months of work.”

The project is an example of the Montessori approach to education — student-driven with guidance from adults. With 142 students enrolled, and 38 staff members on-hand, the Montessori School in Wilton supports children from 14 months through sixth grade in a way that fosters intellectual curiosity and subject mastery through experiential and personalized learning within the bounds of defined curriculum, Potter explained. Classrooms are divided by similar age groups based on a three-year cycle and have carefully prepared environments designed to meet their development needs, with tables and chairs adjusted their height.

Overall, the school’s program is founded upon the scientific research and work of Italian physician, educator and innovator Maria Montessori, who opened the first Montessori school in Rome in 1907.

“Academically, I can’t think of a better way to learn,” Potter said. “It’s not so much about teaching as it is learning.”

Having been a Montessori student herself, Potter attests to the effectiveness of a Montessori education. She later enrolled her son at the Montessori School in Wilton and eventually joined the administration in 2008. The warmth of the community and the breadth of education offered, to both students and parents, were particularly appealing to her, Potter said.

“Not all Montessori schools offer the breadth of that,” Potter said.

With accreditation from both the Association Montessori Internationale and the Connecticut Association of Independent Schools, Potter also believes Montessori education should no longer be considered untraditional but an option for any child. The teachings not only focus on the individual child academically but also allow for social and emotional growth among peers — which make for a holistic education, she said.

“These are important elements to be able to expand intellectually and cerebrally where you can, but at the same time, take care of the whole child,” Potter added.

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