

## Peer to Peer – Jon Ellis

### Listening to President John F. Kennedy

"Please send me the door code" I texted my wife, Melissa, for the umpteenth time over the past few years as I stood outside The Montessori School on a crisp November morning looking to gain entry for our Parent/Teacher Conferences. My inability to retain such a basic piece of information would normally be a source of frustration if not for the fact that I was still reveling in my recent success in navigating from our home to the school without GPS for the first time in 5 years. As I finally gained access to the school on that November morning, I was walking down the hall and was greeted by a good friend who remarked "Look, a unicorn sighting!"

I share these anecdotes not because I am seeking a badge of honor for disengagement with my children's education. To the contrary, I am just as involved as any parent in discussing with our children what happens at school and trying to understand the intricacies of the Pink Tower, Sandpaper Letters and Trinomial Cube along with their experiences during Art, Language and recess periods. While Melissa is present and involved at school every day and holds leadership positions, unfortunately, my personal and professional obligations prevent me from having more of a regular presence on campus. But the one benefit of my separation is that I have been able to objectively evaluate The Montessori School and the experiences of our children given that I am not immersed in the daily life of the community.

When Melissa first mentioned to me 6 years ago that she thought a Montessori program would be appropriate for our daughter, Fiona, my first response was "I don't think a religious school is the right fit." But as I have come to learn about the Montessori methodology and observe first-hand how our children have developed, I can say unequivocally that there is no better opportunity for children during their formative years of development than The Montessori School. Every family defines success differently for their children, but from an intellectual, social and emotional standpoint, I firmly believe that this school has put all three of our children on a path to succeed in life no matter what pursuits they choose in the future. The curiosity and desire for knowledge that our children exhibit when talking about any subject, the ease with which they look people in the eye when speaking to either adults or peers and the patience they exhibit when confronted with challenges at school or at home are all attributes that have been ingrained in them since their time in the Toddler program and would not be as evident if they were immersed in a more traditional school format in my view. This outcome would not be possible without the benefit of being able to interface with accomplished faculty and administrators who are all deeply committed to the Montessori approach and I know I speak for all parents when I say that we owe a debt of gratitude to them for their tireless efforts.

So you are probably saying to yourself by now, I have endured three paragraphs of personal thoughts from this guy that may or may not have resonated with me but what does any of this have to do with President John F. Kennedy? Well, I am glad you asked so let me now bridge the gap. President Kennedy had a saying that hangs in a frame in my home office and reads, "One person can make a difference and everyone should try." I have embraced that saying in many aspects of my own life and I think that the applicability of that saying to The Montessori School has never been more relevant. This institution offers a unique brand of education that effectively prepares our children for success in life both personally and professionally.

However, unlike other private schools that can lean on a low student-teacher ratio as a widely embraced marketing tool that is easily understood by prospective families, The Montessori School must proactively educate around the virtues of its learning format in order to engage new families, and there is no better representative to inform, promote and deliver that message than you -- the families at our school! Being a vocal advocate is part of any community that successfully sustains itself through multiple generations and now is the time for our community to fulfill that role as The Montessori School looks to thrive in the years to come.

But please do not misconstrue this request as some generic call to action and assume that you have fulfilled your responsibility by mentioning that your children go to The Montessori School at the next cocktail party you attend. In fact, there are some very specific tasks that each of you can complete to assist our community-building efforts. Below is a specific list so please consider supporting all of these initiatives:

(1) Follow The Montessori School on [Facebook](#) and Instagram and share posts on your personal pages (especially Open House and other events).

(2) Contact [Beth Flavin](#), Communications Director, to write an online review of the school (a few sentences is more than adequate) on Google and other sites.

(3) Post Open House flyers in your community (library, pediatrician offices, etc.) with the next Open Houses on January 20th and April 14th. [Click here for the flyer](#).

(4) Contact [Ashley Grob](#), Admissions Director, with any ideas for companies or local businesses where there may be a clustering of interested families and Ashley can offer a presentation.

On behalf of the entire Montessori School community, I thank you for your engagement and commitment to this amazing institution and look forward to a bright and prosperous future for our children and our school. Wishing you and family a happy, healthy and peaceful New Year.

***-Jon Ellis***