

# THE MONTESSORI REVIEW

News from the Montessori Teacher Education Graduate Program at Oklahoma City University

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## HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S DAY AND HAPPY EASTER



## MATERIALS FOR THE EDUCATOR

By Mandy Russ

GREAT  
EXTENSIONS

Lori Karmazin started *Great Extensions* in 1994 when she had the idea of having rubber stamps to match the bead bars in the Montessori materials but could not find any company that made them. This dead end in her search prompted Lori to make her own stamps. She made extra sets of stamps, so she brought them to a regional conference to sell and the stamps sold in five minutes! From this she realized this could really be a business and the rest is history. She chose the name *Great Extensions* because she wanted her materials to work with and extend Montessori. She said, "I never wanted the Montessori materials to be replaced... so [the name] seemed fitting."

For 15 years Lori gave all her proceeds of *Great Extensions* to Undercroft. About five years ago Undercroft and *Great Extensions* split apart and Lori Karmazin's business is now its own entity. She sells anything from her original stamps to specialty dice to quilted Montessori mats. *Great Extensions* material has sold to every continent, and she is now beginning to branch out to the public sector creating materials for non-Montessori classrooms. She also started a blog about 6 months ago when she saw another need in the Montessori community. She noticed that at all the AMS conferences while she was vending she would have lines of people waiting to ask her about the multi-purposes her materials could serve in the classroom. She realized it would be helpful for teachers to have a venue to look at ideas for her materials. Her blog shows ways to use her materials in many ways and an outlet for the Montessori community to brainstorm and interact on her materials. She is an inspiration to all teachers and has shown through her generosity and dedication that she is an extremely passionate educator.

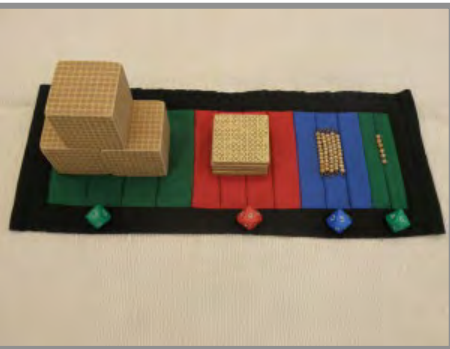
All this started with a fundamental concept of the Montessori way: if there is a need in the classroom, it is the teacher's duty to fill this need. Lori Karmazin has been and continues to be a committed teacher at Undercroft Montessori School in Tulsa for the past 25 years. To visit her website go to: <http://www.great-extensions.com/>

You can also go on *Great Extensions*' Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Great-Extensions/618294024855973>

*Great Extensions* custom made Montessori mat and dice (above)

First *Great Extensions* Material the Colored Bead Bar Stamps (below)



*Great Extensions* founder Lori Karmazin (above)

A young Taiwanese boy using the Montessori Golden Beads and Numeral Cards to calculate a quantity and numeral (below)



Students at An Kang celebrating Chinese New Year by making Dragon and Lion costumes and parading around the street in happiness (above)

## ALUMNI AICHEN WORKING IN TAIWANESE SCHOOL: ANKANG PRIMARY SCHOOL

By: Mandy Russ

I had the opportunity to talk to a OCU Montessori Alumni who now works at a Montessori based school in YiLan City in Taiwan. The school she works at, An Kang Primary School (安康幼兒園) is a prepared Montessori environment where teachers work with students using Montessori materials. AiChen created extensions of Montessori materials for An Kang to make the environment more active and rich. She is using her observations skills greatly in her position in YiLan City; she says she, “observes the responses of the children and discusses with the teachers” what she sees (AiChen). She says most Montessori schools are based off the AMI model of Montessori and are not multi-age. The culture of the Taiwanese students that attend Montessori school influence how the structure is set up.

AiChen has been teaching at An Kang for 12 years and started working with pre-kindergarten students (four years olds) in a self-contained environment. Since then she has been learning the practical application of the Montessori way in the classroom. She shows her ambition as an experienced teacher when she says that the reason why she started there at An Kang is because, “I can have more freedom to have a class to set up the environment and make projects,” (AiChen).

An Kang is based on Montessori’s teachings in Italy and transformed to meet the needs of the students living in Taiwan. Montessori, or 蒙特梭利 in Mandarin, created an atmosphere where the teacher follows the child and that is what inspires An Kang. The school has a rich Montessori environment filled with all the four basic areas of Montessori: Practical Life, Sensorial, Math, and Language. They also have enriched areas that are extensions of the basic Montessori such as Geography and Science. Their website shares details on how the school prides themselves on their key Montessori concepts. Translated to English, the Montessori materials are used in An Kang just like how Maria designed them: to work from “specific” → ‘semi-specific’ → ‘abstract,’ but catered to meet the needs of the culture such as projects that emphasize cultural celebrations (translated from <http://www.ankan.com.tw/>).

An Kang’s main philosophy based on the Montessori way is simply that, “the teacher designs the environment according to the internal needs of the child; this allows the child’s experience to be joyful, rich, and complete in understanding,” (translated from <http://www.ankan.com.tw/>).

*Continued pictures on page 3*



A boy using three part cards to learn the names of family members in Mandarin (left)

Ankang Primary School's logo (right)



A child working on an extension of the basic Montessori materials (left)

## COURTROSE EDUCATION STUDIOS IN CANADA: AN ALUMNI ENTREPRENEUR ANKIE YIP

By: Mandy Russ and Ankie Yip

Ankie Yip is an OCU Montessori Alumni who is also the founder of this newsletter. After graduation she moved to Canada and started her own business called *Courtrose Education Studios*. I was able to ask her a few questions about her experience starting a company and how OCU's Montessori program helped her achieve this. This is what she had to say:

### 1. What is your mission statement or goal for *Courtrose Education Studios*?

Essentially my goal is to offer learning opportunities for early childhood in various Montessori-based topics and areas. The private piano program features lessons lead by a qualified teacher once per week in a one-on-one setting. What is unique about this program is that I've created a separate assessment component that allows for an in-depth focus on human development ranging from domain capacities to early childhood skill sets emphasized in Montessori pedagogy. The piano program is designed in a way that "trains the brain" and goes beyond the basic lessons that most traditional piano programs offer.

### 2. Can you talk about the math Montessori based programs you offer?

The math program consists of structured "short courses" that help to introduce early learning mathematical concepts to parents and children such as quantification, 1:1 correspondence, and quantity-to-symbol association (QSA). It is created in a very detailed, step-by-step format with scaffolding techniques. I'm constantly drawing on research from OCU's Montessori math course, and on-going resources to ensure that when I do get the chance to expand it into a long-term program, it can evolve into the Montessori math area with Montessori materials. Because of the "start-up" nature of the organization right now, the lessons are a mix of traditional and Montessori methods. The lessons are structured in a way that incorporates Montessori pedagogical philosophy and Montessori style of delivery within a one-hour time frame per lesson. The lead teacher must continue to be a detailed observer of the children, and utilize non-intrusive assessment techniques designed to uphold quality pedagogy mirroring Montessori classroom practices.

*Continued on Page 4*

### 3. How did you come up with the name "Courtrose Education Studios"?

I had been trying to come up with a memorable, unique name that would be meaningful to the organization but generic enough so that I could branch off into education-related product lines when the time comes. I decided to combine my street name ("Courtland") and my grandmother's favourite flower (a "Rose"). She was a very strong, supportive person in my life, and was very special to me.

### 4. Do you have any advice or insight for the upcoming class of Montessorians?

I believe OCU's Montessori Teacher Education Program has done a tremendous job of encouraging teachers to be innovative. There are several practical activities and theories from OCU's Montessori program that I still draw on in order to create interesting, original content. I've learned that the brain works in miraculous ways. OCU's program showed me how to put a unique spin on my own projects. In education, where teachers work with children or managers who lead a team, believing first and foremost in people and their talents is what can help propel a team further. For me personally, I've learned that in order to cultivate excellence in people, whether they are children or adults, human capital is what helps drive innovation and ideas forward.



Ankie Yip OCU Alumni class of 2014 at home studio (far left)

Teacher-made Math material examples including Action cup for kinesthetic gross motor in math (left)



### Please join us for the OCU Montessori Graduate Student Final Project Presentation!

**Where:** The Great Hall in the University Center at OCU

**When:** Friday, April 24, 2015  
5:30 (preview of presentations)  
6 -9 (presentations)

**Description:** All Montessori students will be presenting their final projects that were implemented in 3-6 classrooms.  
*Hope to see you there!*



### ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER

This publication serves as a platform for current students and alumni to communicate ideas, share experiences and stay in touch with colleagues. If you have any questions, comments or feedback, please write to us at:

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