

MONTGOMERYACADEMY



Life

WINTER 2014

Montgomery Academy
The only thing missing is YOU!
Join Us As We Continue
Our Journey Into The 21st Century

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A Message from Mr. Anthony Gebbia



While so much was made of the end of the 20th century, it seems like the last 15 years have passed in the blink of an eye. Children born at the beginning of the 21st century are entering high school and those who graduated high school in 2000 are taking their own children to the school bus stop every morning.

Perhaps this is a good time to pause for a moment and assess where we are. These last 15 years have been a time of incredible change in our lives, our technology, and our schools. We have moved from chalkboards to white boards to smart boards to iPads, smart tablets, and nearly 100% wireless connectivity. Our phones are our calendars and our calendars are connected to an endless web of other calendars hosted by other technologies.

We have sped up our lives and shrunk the world. If our fame lasted a full 15 minutes, that would be a long time. We Snapchat, Instagram, and Tweet. We have become a state of binary numbers in an endless stream of data.

But where does this really leave us?

It leaves us with still the most important job – and that job has nothing to do with technology, connectivity, and digital communication.

Our job is still the education of our children, and here at Montgomery Academy, the education of the most vulnerable of our children. Our students can always use a new learning tool, and we do everything we can to introduce our students to the latest cutting edge technology. At Montgomery Academy we understand the pressure of living in a high speed digital world, yet we combat that with perhaps the only thing that cannot be digitized. At Montgomery Academy we love our students. We champion the incremental success of our population. We advocate for those who cannot yet advocate for themselves.

Yes – the brain can be mapped and our computers can beat even the highest ranked chess masters. But the digital world is nothing without its analogue counterpart – and that is the love and dedication we have for our students.

So – please join us as we continue our journey into the 21st century.



LETTERS - LETTERS - LETTERS

A Letter from the Murphys

Not a week passes since our son Luke began at Montgomery Academy last September where we haven't expressed heartfelt gratitude for the amazing staff and administrators. Here is a school where you see first hand the benefits of an egalitarian community: students are entrusted and treated with respect and encouragement and there is reciprocity of openness and warmth between the staff and students.



Luke had attended his previous school for five years, and towards the end he had reached a point where he was no longer flourishing. After doing some research, we found Montgomery Academy and quickly discovered that everyone we spoke to had great things to say about this school.

Although my husband and I had made up our minds that this would be an ideal place to transfer Luke, we were concerned about how things would play out because transitions are very challenging for him. From the outset, Tony Gebbia and Tom Nolan were sensitive to the situation, and worked very closely with us to guide Luke throughout the process, including taking a walk and talking with him to allay his anxiety during a visit before the start of school. I will always be grateful for their responsiveness and support.

In the end, our son transitioned more smoothly than we could have dreamed of and everybody has been fantastic in making themselves available to Luke and to us. The curriculum and vocational training are excellent, and Luke is flourishing in his new school.

THREE



A Message from Mr. Thomas Nolan



During this time of year, with the numerous holidays upon us, I annually find myself reflecting on how much there is to be grateful for each day and how often that thanks is not shared.

As Henry Van Dyke (American author, educator, and clergyman) once stated, "Gratitude is the inward feeling of kindness received. Thankfulness is the natural impulse to express that feeling. Thanksgiving is the following of that impulse." With this in mind I want to recognize and express my gratitude, appreciation, and thanks for so much of what positively impacts our days here at Montgomery Academy. First and foremost, I want to recognize the students for all the lessons they bring to me with what they say and with what they do. Just recently I was able to watch one of our more experienced students independently, with no adult direction, sit with a newer student and provide open insight and clarity regarding a situation; both these students, as well as I gained from that experience and the words that were shared benefited us all. I am thankful for those types of influences on me daily here.



I also need to thank each of the parents for their wisdom, collaboration and support which occur multiple times each day for any number of us. With this teamwork of the parents and families of our students we are all much more likely to grow and learn in such a meaningful and authentic manner. I speak for all of us when I sincerely express that we cannot do the things we do without the willingness and kindness that the families share with us.

For all of you who are here each day, I want to give you my never ending thanks! To the teachers and educational support staff, I will never be able to put into words how each of you continue to inspire me with your commitment, kindness, patience and expertise in working with our students. You all bring such heart into supporting and caring for both the children and each other. The teamwork and compassion amongst the adults is another hallmark of the uniquely optimistic environment we get to experience here each day.

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Cheryl's Curriculum Corner

The recent implementation of the Core Standards has created a spirited debate that has become the core topic of every discussion about education. This kind of discussion is not new to anyone in education, and goes back well over one hundred years. Since the creation of the first one-room school house, there have been many great thinkers who have contributed to the debate and discourse of the field of effective instruction.



One name that most might not be familiar with is Dr. Peter Senge. Dr. Senge is a soft-spoken individual who has been called a management and business guru. He believes that success in business and success in schools can be similarly defined in that both need to place a high priority on human values.

He believes that vision, purpose, reflectiveness and systems thinking are essential for both businesses and schools to flourish. He is author of many books including *The Fifth Discipline* and has a new book recently published titled *The Triple Focus: A New Approach to Education*. In Dr. Senge's most recent book, he and Dr. Daniel Goleman describe the need for schools to help students to understand how our relationships with the world are important. This is also described as teaching the ability to see the "Big Picture."

It is interesting to note that Dr. Senge's background includes his study of the principals put forth by John Dewey. Dewey was a philosopher who lived from the mid 19th century to the middle of the 20th century. He wrote extensively about education and the need to understand education as an interactive and social process. Dewey believed that students should take part in the direction of their own learning. By doing so, students could then work within an environment based on their previous experiences and current interests. Dewey believed in a child-centered education where the teacher(s) helped the student grow.

I hope you will remember a previous "Corner" writings in which I spoke about Montgomery Academy having its foundations built upon Dewey's philosophy of education. The primary principal of Dewey and therefore Senge's is meeting the individual needs of all students. Preparing students for successful academic achievement needs to go hand and hand with providing a nurturing environment for all aspects of the student as well.

The new standards and formal assessments focus on the discrete parts of the whole. Senge's theory involves looking at how things (and people) connect to the larger

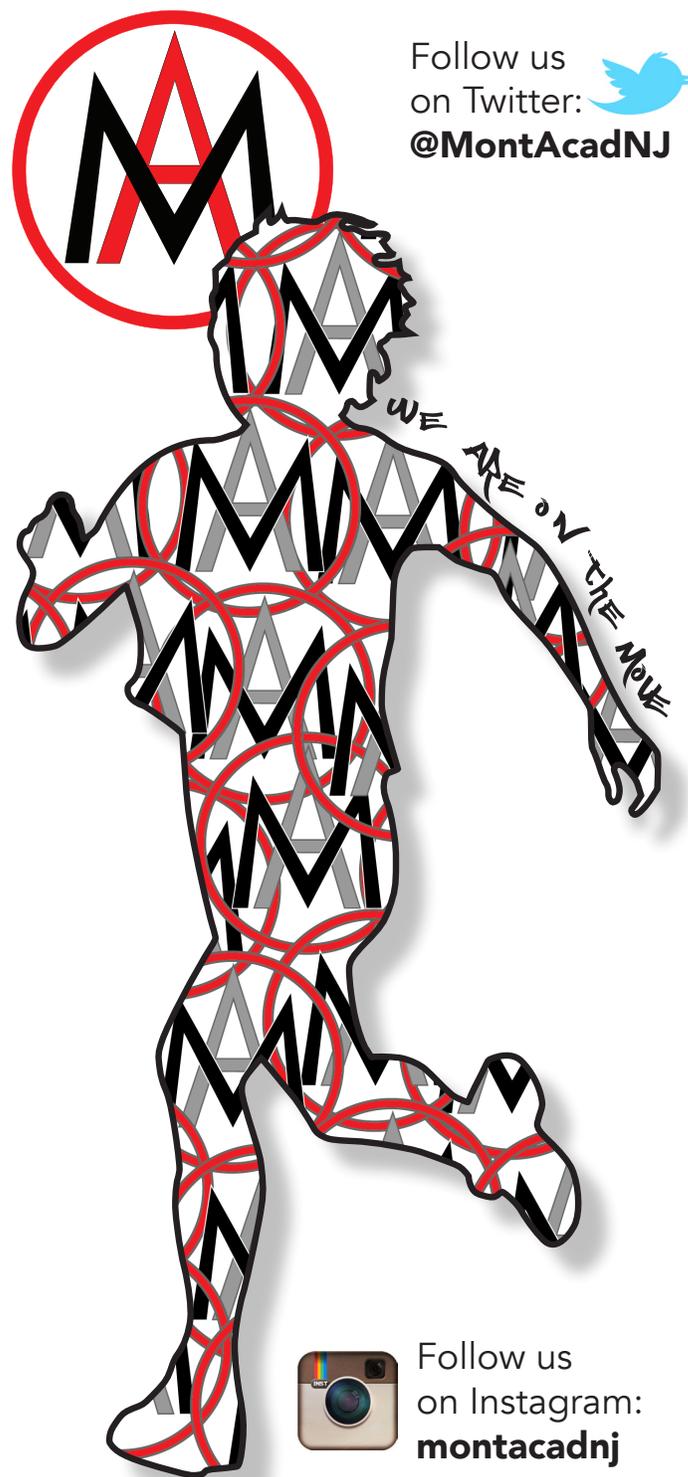
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picture and not the assessment of singular skills. Senge and others are observing the turning back the hands of time with regards to education. A century ago schools were factory-like in that education was viewed analogous to a mass-production assembly line. Little interest was placed on the individual student's growth. Instead certain "goals" were established for the class and a student's success was based on those broad benchmarks.

Senge states that these new core standards will fail for the same reason the No Child Left Behind Act failed as, "it will be driven by the simplistic standards keyed to a simplistic, dysfunctional, obsolete, 19th century curriculum". (Education Weekly, 2009)

The US Department of Education is looking to enhance the industrial, modernist character of schools. Some of these ideas include longer school days, weeks and years; national subject standards and national tests and merit pay, which financially rewards teachers, to produce higher test scores. According to Education Weekly all of these ideas result in schools potentially becoming "test-prep factories". (Education Weekly, 2009) Senge describes these ideas as the problems, not the solutions.

I ask that you as a parent take a look at the writings of Dr. Peter Senge. See if you agree with his educational philosophy. The success or failure of this current educational movement is not yet determined. But for anyone interested in the current debate on education should be informed about the high stakes of our students' future.



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Our Facebook page
has a new address.
You can find us at:
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Spotlight on the Future

Montgomery Academy
The Zeros and Ones (so far)



As we have moved into the 21st century, technology has become both increasingly complicated and simple at the same time. In many ways, education is no different. In the past decade Montgomery Academy has employed the use of the latest technology available to our students. Currently we use a vast array of hardware and software – not to make things easier, but to level the playing field.

Just a few Examples Include:

ZAC Browser – www.zacbrowser.com/
ZAC is the first web browser developed specifically for children with autism and autism spectrum disorders such as Asperger syndrome, pervasive developmental disorders (PDD) and PDD-NOS.

Bookshare – www.bookshare.org
Bookshare® is the world's largest accessible online library for people with print disabilities.

Speak it! – www.future-apps.net/
Text to Speech software

Kurzweil – <http://www.kurzweiledu.com/>
Kurzweil Education offers proven, research-based, literacy solutions that enable learners to address their own unique learning challenges and build the skills and confidence to succeed in academically rigorous environments.

These are just a few aspects of cutting-edge technology and programs we use everyday. Each "Montgomery Life" will spotlight a different aspect of the technology we use to educate our community of learners.

Shop at AmazonSmile
and Amazon will make
a donation to:
Montgomery Academy
A New Jersey Non Profit
Corporation



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Save The Date!



EIGHT

The Montgomery Academy
Annual Gala
Friday, April 24, 2015
6pm to 9pm.

MAKE IT REAL PROGRAM UPDATE

The Make It Real (MIR) Employment and Skill Development Program continues to grow and expand with new and exciting changes this school year! We have added a new MIR classroom, expanded MIR IV, and welcomed two new teachers to the program, Andrea and John, to support MIR students in Math and Science.

Our MIR I and II students are receiving a strong academic program and vocational sampling through volunteering at the Reeves-Reed Arboretum and job shadowing opportunities. Our first job shadowing visitation will be at the Weis grocery store on October 22nd. Both classes will be getting a tour of the business, a presentation on the types of employment, as well as information on making smart shopping choices for health and budget.

The MIR III students have nearly completed their high school requirements and are gaining hands-on experience in the Project Room, Woodshop, and Culinary Arts Room. They are also partaking in a community internship. We have a new addition to the Project Room this year - a state of the art Epilog Laser etching machine. There are no limits to the creative projects we'll be making with it! Award plaques, laser engraved diplomas, custom labels, holiday ornaments, and engraved Montgomery Academy water bottles are just a few projects MIR students will be creating this year. Be on the lookout for our annual MIR Catalog where we will be selling our hand-crafted products.



Our post-grad MIR IV program is stronger than ever. We have added in-house internships that have enabled students to experience even more hands-on vocational training in clerical work, web development, custodial work, food preparation, and independent living. I am also proud to announce that we have added two new internship partners to our roster, Burger King of Gillette and Matheny Schools.

Our community internships now include: Shoprite, Friendlys, Somerset Regional Animal Shelter, Holly Manor Senior Living, Cherrybrook Pet Supplies, The UPS Store, Marshalls, Somerset Education Center, Visiting Nurse Association, Second Chance Thrift Store, STS Tire and Auto, CVS, YMCA Day Care, Bernardsville Library, Flowers on the Ridge, NJ Audubon Society, Acorn Hall Historical, Manestream, Staples, and a major regional hospital. Students are now three weeks into their internships and have done a fantastic job. I have no doubt this will be MIR's best year yet!

The Make It Real Program is selling our annual Holiday Gift Bag. Every item in the gift bag is made by the MIR classes! Please take a look at the catalog and think of supporting them. It really gives our students a sense of purpose and they're able to see firsthand how items are made, sold, and distributed.

This year we're offering:

- "MA" pen & pencil holder (perfect for your desk!)
- An "MA" wooden plaque (created with our new laser machine)
- Handcrafted holiday snowmen ornaments
- Delicious homemade candy

**CONTACT MICHAEL ENGBER
FOR A CATALOGUE**

FROM A SUMMER OF A LIFETIME



to AN AUTUMN to



REMEMBER





MONTGOMERY ACADEMY

Dates to Remember

DEC. 19	HOLIDAY CONCERT
DEC. 23	EARLY DISMISSAL
JAN. 5	SCHOOL REOPENS
JAN. 19	SCHOOL CLOSED - MLK DAY
FEB. 13/16	SCHOOL CLOSED - PRES. DAY
MARCH 6	ITALIAN NIGHT
APRIL 24	ANNUAL GALA

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