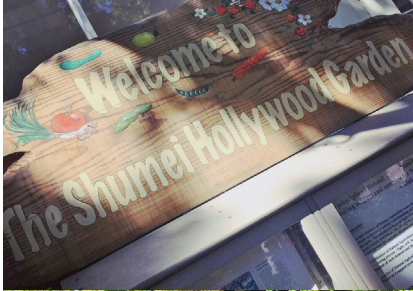


NEWS LETTER

Meher Middle School at
The Shumei Hollywood Garden



WELCOME

Welcome to all the new and returning students of Meher Montessori School.



This is our 46th year of service to the children of the Los Angeles Area.

We look forward to a new school year full of excitement and enthusiasm for learning and discovery.



www.mehermontessori.org

Adela Muñoz
Director



Nurturing and helping each child to develop their full potential through the principals and direction of the Association Montessori Internationale has been our mission from our School's beginning in 1972. AMI was founded by Dr. Maria Montessori in 1929 to protect and maintain the integrity of her life's work.

Meher Montessori School's dedicated and inspired AMI-credentialed teachers, through their training, prepared environment and Montessori materials, work to instill a lifelong love of learning and creative and critical thinking skills. They also work to build caring self-motivated citizens who respect others and their environment.

We are a community of teachers, parents and students working together – not just for the intellectual development of the child – but also their social, emotional and spiritual development.

The start of the new school year has been bustling with energy and excitement. The classrooms are filled with joyful children happy to be back at school and the new ones are quickly getting adjusted. We look forward to another wonderful and successful school year.



OUR STAFF

We are very proud of our staff. We have the most experienced and dedicated AMI Montessori teaching staff in the Los Angeles area. Our teaching assistants, day care staff and other support personnel are excellent as well and many have been with our school for more than a decade.



John Page is the Founder and Executive Director of our School. He founded the Meher Montessori School in Altadena in 1972. He taught there, as well as administrated, until 1982 when he started an affiliated school in Alhambra. Then for the next 2 years he taught in Alhambra, as well as doing its administrative work, until starting our Monterey Park School in 1984.

He is a graduate of UCLA and the AMI Montessori Institute of Los Angeles. Mr. Page holds an AMI Primary teaching credential from the Montessori Institute of Los Angeles and an AMI Elementary teaching credential from the Montessori Institute of Milwaukee. He will be teaching the Middle School children computer related programs.



Adela Muñoz is our School's Director. She started with the school as a

part time substitute teacher in September 1992, became our assistant director in 1993. She became the School's Director in 2004. Adela graduated from the AMI Teacher Training at the AMI Montessori Institute of Los Angeles and holds an AMI Primary Teacher's Diploma. She also completed administrative requirements through UCLA extension.



Len Mindes has been teaching and leading the Meher Middle

School since its inception, now in its sixth year. Len is an AMI Elementary Teacher, a 1995 graduate of the Washington Montessori Institute. In the summer of 2013 he spent 5 weeks at the Hershey Montessori School in Ohio taking the AMI Montessori Orientation to Adolescent Studies course. We are excited to have him again lead our Middle School.



Annette Mills started working at the Meher

Montessori School in Monterey Park in 1992 as a part-time P.E. teacher. She also worked with the Primary children in extended day care in the afternoon. She completed her required Child Development courses at East Los Angeles College. She is assisting in Mr. Mindes' class.



Emily Strand is our Upper Elementary teacher. Emily joined her first

Montessori community back in 2008 in San Rafael, California. She spent many years in a Lower Elementary classroom first as an assistant, and then as a Head Teacher. After completing her training she received her AMI diploma from The Montessori Institute of Milwaukee in 2011. She is originally from the San Diego area and attended San Diego State University. Emily has also completed the AMI Inclusive Education training at the Montessori Institute of San Diego. She is now thrilled to be at Meher in the Upper Elementary class and is eager to do many community projects with the class! She really loves working on math, art, and

cooking with the children. In her spare time, she is usually enjoying a hike, run or training for a triathlon.



Allison Tenold is from the great state of Washington and is our AMI

Montessori Elementary teacher for the Lower Elementary classroom with children from 6-9 years of age. Allison joined us in 2011 as an assistant in both the Upper and Lower Elementary classrooms. In 2013 she completed her Montessori Elementary training at the Montessori Institute of Milwaukee. She holds a Masters in Education from Eastern Washington University and is credentialed to teach in the WA public schools. Allison is passionate about the Montessori philosophy as she was a Montessori child herself.



Michelle Gonzalez (parent of Meher alums Jacqueline &

Samantha) joined our staff ten years ago as a substitute teacher and a librarian. This is her tenth year assisting in the classrooms. Michelle earned her Certificate in Child Development

from Rio Hondo College. In addition she recently earned her Holistic Health Counselor Certificate from The Institute for Integrative Nutrition.



Maria Rivera is with us for her seventeenth year. She is

a teacher in one of our Primary classrooms. She is a graduate of Western Mindanao State University in the Philippines where she achieved two B.S. degrees. One is in chemistry and the other in elementary education. In addition, she has a Certificate of Specialization in Pre-school Education. Maria graduated from The Montessori Institute of San Diego with her AMI Primary Teacher's Diploma.



Ji Young Suh is Mrs. Rivera's full time teaching assistant. She

is starting her fifteenth year at Meher. Ji was with our school for many years as a parent. Her two children, Joon-Woo and Erica are former students. She is a graduate of Ewha Woman's University in Seoul, Korea and received her Child Development

Certificate from Patten University.



Salena Bayon is with us for her eighteenth year. She is an assistant in the

Primary classrooms. Her daughter Kaya is starting her second year in Ms. Strand's Upper Elementary class.



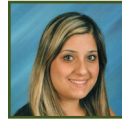
Aleli Roque has a Bachelor's degree in Music Literature

from the University of the Philippines. She first began teaching music classes in a Montessori school in the Los Angeles area during the mid 80's then became a full time Montessori teacher for 12 years. Since then, she has loved being in a Montessori environment. She received a Certificate in Child Development through UCLA extensions and a Music Specialist Certificate for Early Childhood from Pasadena City College. She recently graduated from the AMI Primary Training course at the Montessori Institute of San Deigo.



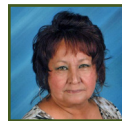
Monica Lopez began working at Meher in

October 2014. She is a teaching assistant in Mrs. Roque's class. She received her Associate Degree in Social Science from Santa Monica College, and graduated Cal State University Los Angeles in Cultural Anthropology with honors. Prior to working at Meher, she worked for the Boys and Girls Club, and for an after school program of the Alhambra School District. In her free time, she enjoys going to the gym and weight lifting. She also enjoys hiking and being with her family. She just completed her first summer of AMI primary training.



Royann Kulwicki joined our staff in 2013 and is assisting in

Mrs. Roque's class. She completed her required Child Development course work at Pasadena City College and has a six year old daughter.



Cynthia Martinez is an assistant in the Primary classrooms

and also works in our after school Primary day care. Cynthia is a very special staff member because this is her thirty-fourth year

of service in our School. She started with us in September 1984 when our Monterey Park facility opened. Besides having completed course work for her Child Development I certificate, she has completed a special course on the Montessori Method for the paraprofessional.



Nancy Ramirez works assisting in the Primary classrooms as

well as the Primary and Elementary after school day care. She has twenty two years experience in child care.



Elodia (Kookie) Chavez (parent of Meher alums

Evita & Eli) is the School's Business Administrator. She is in charge of all student records, county required student reports, payroll, and human resources.



Linda Joe (aka Mrs. Yoshida – parent of Meher alums Taylor &

Timothy) is in the office one day a week. She is in charge of the School

newsletter and with her graphic arts background also makes class materials for the School. She is currently also teaching the after school Art class.



Karina Page is the wife of John Page, and helps the School with

the garden, supplies, and the Library.



LIBRARY NEWS

The Meher Library Opens Again!

This year Mrs. Diaz, Mrs. Walton and Mrs. Marquez will continue to keep Meher Library open after School on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 3 pm for students who wish to browse, relax, and enhance their reading interests.

They are joined this year by Mrs. Gonzalez, who will taking Lower Elementary students, as well as Upper Elementary upon request, to visit the Library during regular School hours to check out books.

All our Librarians wish you a wonderful School year. As one student said to me recently "Please get the best books possible for us!" -- a hearty endorsement of our Library's place in their lives as they look forward to new reading.

Mrs. Diaz, Mrs. Marquez, Mrs. Walton, Mrs. Gonzalez and Mrs. Page

Welcome everyone to the start of Meher Montessori School's 46th school year. Meher is the oldest AMI accredited school in Los Angeles county and we continue to strive to provide the best Montessori Education for our students and to provide a special experience for them and their families. We have some new students this year in all of our classrooms and I want to extend a special welcome to them and hope that our returning parents can share some of your Meher experiences with their parents.

We have had a wonderful and happy start to the school year. Adjustments are moving along quickly and the classrooms are feeling peaceful and joyful. Our committed staff continues to provide wonderful care to your children and we are fortunate to have so many long time staff members return year after year. Consistency is so important for the children and our team continues to provide a loving and caring environment for our students. This wonderful group of people continue to impress me with their professionalism and dedication to Meher.

Our Middle School continues with an all female student body this year. Mr. Mindes and the support teachers are planning some exciting work and events for the students. We will share in future newsletters some of these activities. Also, we will have a special section introducing our Middle School support teachers and their work with the students in our next newsletter.

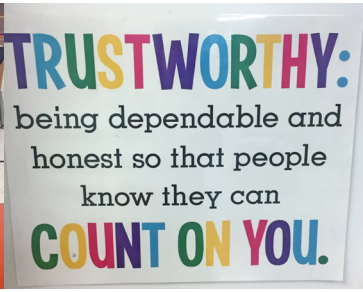
We will be having a Public Open House on Saturday, October 27 from 10:00 to 2:00. Please share this with friends and family and if anyone you recommend enrolls you will receive a \$100 credit towards your next tuition payment. We are also asking parents to take a moment and share some good thoughts on Meher and your experiences here on Yelp. If you post a positive comment you will receive a \$50 credit on your next tuition payment as a thank you for your time. And if you haven't visited our Instagram account yet, please take a moment to do so. It is a great way to see what goes on daily at Meher and also a great share with friends and family. You can find us at [meher_montessori_schools](#).

Our promise to you is to provide a safe and loving learning environment for your child and to work with you as a partner in your child's journey of discovery. We ask that you support our work and the classroom by having your child here on time every day. The harmony and rhythm of the classroom is affected by excessive absences and by children arriving late.

As always, please feel free to stop by my office any time if you have any questions or concerns.

Peace and love,
Adela Muñoz
Director

"Our aim is not only to make the child understand, and still less to force him to memorize, but also to touch his imagination as to enthuse him to his innermost core."
—Dr. Maria Montessori



Another year has passed and here we are in the beginning of a new school year! This year will be full of blessings, excitement, challenges and discoveries for the children in what they can do and learn! We are blessed with children that are energetic, smart and always eager to come to school to learn, sing, move their bodies and listen to stories read during our circle time! I do hope that everybody enjoyed their summer vacation. Mine started after summer classes. The first two weeks of August were quite busy, full of bonding and excitement in preparation for my second son's church wedding. The remaining weeks of August were restful to get ready to be back to work once again this year.

To all our returning children, and their parents, Mrs. Suh, Ms. Martinez and I would like to say welcome back. Some children stayed at Meher all through Summer School and August Daycare, so they have been able to jump right back into the swing of things in the classroom. Others are still taking some time to adjust, especially the new children in class. Most of our returning children are excited to be back to school and see

their classmates once again.

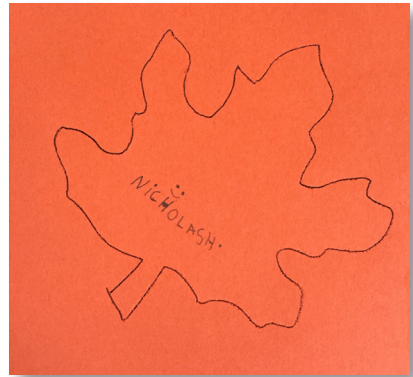
We have three new children joining our class this year. Mrs. Suh, Ms. Martinez and I would like to welcome Logan Chanco, Millie Li and Ardian Lin. Overall they are settling down nicely in our classroom. Older children are more understanding, caring and helpful to one another, especially to the new ones in class. They set the model for good behavior and right conduct in class. These children are continuing the math and language work where they left off in the summer. They are mastering their cursive letters through constant writing and reading. The Movable Alphabet, Reading Cards and cursive writing of 3 letter words are popular with the older children. Younger children are working more on the practical life and sensorial exercises. The secondary colors and science areas are in high rotation with these children.

A friendly and important reminder to keep in mind for all our parents: our class starts at 8:15 a.m. and ends at 2:30 p.m. Tardy children are distracting to the other children who are trying to settle in for their day. So please make every

effort to have your child arrive at school on time. Also, class time is for the children. Please allow your child to enter the classroom on his/her own. Entering with your child is disrupting to the class. If your child would like to give you a tour of what he's doing, before or after school are appropriate times. If parents would like to talk to me regarding their child, I am available when school ends at 2:30. For less pressing matters, parents can also email me at marie_rivera792000@yahoo.com. The last Friday of every month is "School Shirt Day." Please help your child to remember to wear his or her School Shirt on this day. Classrooms with 100% participation are rewarded with a yummy treat the following month. We look forward to a wonderful year together!

Thank you.

Mrs. Rivera, Mrs. Suh, Ms. Martinez, Ms. Bayon, Ms. Kuwicki and Ms. Ramirez





We welcome everyone to this new school year 2018-2019. We are looking forward to a wonderful year with lots of fun and a variety of learning experiences for your child. Each month, you will receive a school calendar and a newsletter. Please read each issue as it contains valuable information relating to your child's involvement in our program.

Our returning students came back on the 4th of September, eager to meet their old friends and get back to work with familiar materials in our prepared environment. This September we have four new children joining our class: Santi, Cailynn, Luke and Gianna. The first few weeks for them was a time for adjustment to this new environment, seeing new faces, and meeting new friends and teachers. This was also a time to familiarize themselves with our classroom routines like lining up, carrying their lunch boxes and putting them on the shelf, hanging their sweaters and jackets, greeting the teachers with a handshake, and washing their hands before working with the materials in the classroom.

Our day begins with a short group time. We sing our "Good Morning" song and go around the circle singing each child's name. We also pick the

student of the day to do the calendar and lead the children in singing the "Days of the Week". Arriving early by 8:15 a.m. is crucial because it will give your child a chance to be part of this morning circle time. Being consistent with this morning routine helps with your child's sense of order, it gives him assurance and makes him or her feel secure. Plus, your child will benefit in getting the full 3-hour work period in the morning. This is when most lessons are given by the teacher individually. Late arrivals also disrupt the flow of the classroom and the concentration of the children already working. Thank you for bringing your child early.

During the first few weeks of school, we will be reviewing classroom rules and procedures (like walking in the classroom, speaking softly, respecting another child's work space) as well as outside play rules. We will also be talking about the Season of Fall and reading of books relating to the changing seasons during our story time.

In the afternoons after recess, we have music and movement or a group activity. Here's one of the action songs we've been learning. Ask your child to show you the movements.

Five Little Leaves

***Five little leaves all bright and gay,
Dancing around on the tree one day.***

***The wind came blowing through
the town,
(wooshshshsh)***

***One little leaf came tumbling down.
Dut dut dut dut dut duh dut dut***

On the last Friday of each month we have our School Shirt Day. We're encouraging everyone to wear their school shirt on Friday, Sept. 28. This can be purchased in the office.

This year we are welcoming back Ms. Lopez, fresh from her 1st Summer

AMI Montessori Training course in San Diego. As part of her training, she will be assisting in the classroom and working with the children. Also joining our team this year is Ms. Bayon. She worked in our class this past summer as an assistant doing creative art projects with the children. She will float between the two Primary classrooms.

Happy Fall to everyone. Here's to a fruitful start of the school year.

Thank you for entrusting the care of your children to us.

Mrs. Roque



Follow us on **Instagram**
meher_montessori_schools

Welcome to another school year! We have 24 bright and shining students. This year, our special third graders are Ezio Veneziano, Mia Li, and Naya Del Castillo. They are doing a wonderful job leading the class and taking care of many responsibilities. We are so lucky because they each bring different personalities and leadership qualities.

Naya likes dancing and singing and making models of what she is learning. Ezio likes video games and animals, and likes to learn about the periodic

table of elements. Mia likes to read at home, and she likes learning about animals and places around the world. All three love taking care of the pets.

We are fortunate this year to have not just one great assistant, but two! Ms. Kulwicki, Maddison's mom, is joining us in the mornings and Mrs. Gonzalez returns to be with us both mornings and afternoons. Having these wonderful ladies is a major benefit to the class - having them here brings great energy, and they are willing to bend over backward to give students what they want and need. The children like talking to them throughout the day, and boy are these ladies kind and loving towards them.



We've already celebrated several birthdays! Violet turned 7 on September 2, and Maddison turned 6 on September 24! We all celebrated together, with Violet even bringing us treats on the first day of school and Maddison rounding out the end of the month with a celebration for her.

Two of our students who had birthdays in August wanted to partake in a party here since we are not in school in August. Rotimi's birthday was August 30, and Naya's August 2, so their parents came and

brought some treats to share and we did our little celebration for them.

Our class is thrilled to have our pets- our bearded dragon and finches- so a huge thank you to Juliet Diaz's family and Mateo and Paolo Ramirez's family for taking them for the summer and caring for them so expertly. We cannot thank you enough.

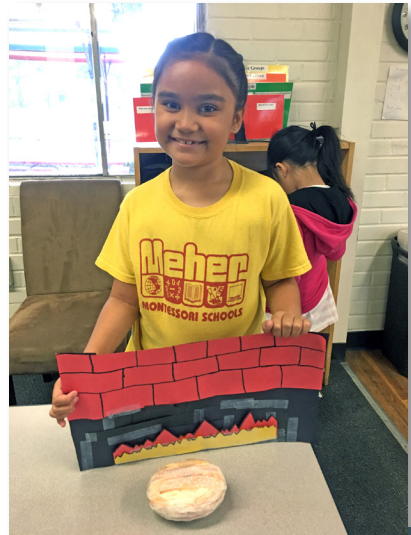
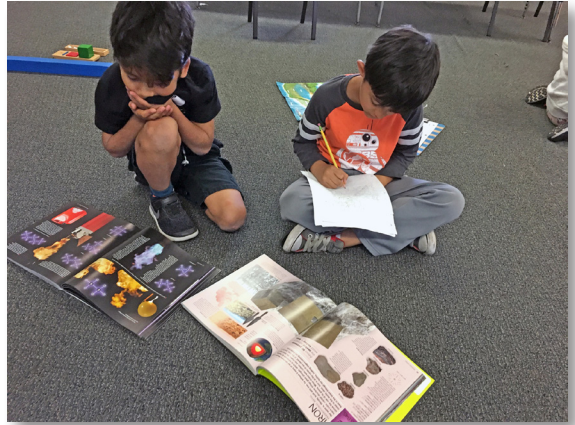
The first day of school was exciting and joyful! Students in the Elementary really like working with each other, so they were happy to be back together with their classmates and they were ready to get to work right away! They are also very kind and thoughtful. Aside from the birthday treats that students brought, Patrick chose to bring his classmates cupcakes

just to say welcome back. I have seen many examples of thoughtful behavior: another young boy got up from his work to get chairs for classmates who were going to come sit nearby, and the children clap for and encourage each other.

In the mornings, during circle time from 8:15-8:45, we do a lesson about the Timeline of Life. This is a cornerstone to the Montessori curriculum and so far I have focused on the early plant life, which is a great introduction to our class garden. In the first few weeks of school, Mrs. Gonzalez helps the third years plant many vegetables and flowers brought to us by Mrs. Page, and we invite the whole class out to watch the process and learn.

Children are also working on some fundamental skills like handwriting, reading, spelling, and doing skip counting, and they can do this together and at their own pace. Please encourage your child to write in cursive in class. It is a skill that stimulates brain development, and it is the form of writing we use in Montessori rooms. Thanks for all of your help in your child's education. It's going to be a great year!

Ms. Tenold





The school year has begun, and is off to a great start! As this year marks my third year as the Upper El Lead Teacher, it feels especially exciting to have a group that is my first full Montessori three year cycle, with Damian Lucero, Enzo Chavez, and TJ Ogden as the 6th grade leaders. While many of the classroom traditions and expectations are the same from years past, there are many new exciting aspects to our classroom community.

So many fascinating projects have been underway in the classroom. Poetry is being written, songs are being created, dioramas and sculptures designed, science theories tested, timelines produced, and lots of research and math being practiced. A sample of some of the lessons we have had so far are: The Timeline of Life, prehistory/ history, parts of a flower, calligraphy, taking notes, business plan writing, squaring, cubing, multiples, long multiplication, long division, and a brushing up of math facts and abstract addition and subtraction for everyone. The classroom has been a lively and productive place these past three weeks, and I feel inspired each day by the level of enthusiasm,

support, and community we are creating together.

We have also been conducting many short and longer meetings as a group where everyone gets an opportunity to reflect on a topic and share their thoughts and experiences. What it means to be diverse, inclusive, safe, show commitment, be respectful, come up with resolutions, and be realistic are some of the topics we have covered in our group meetings so far. Meetings are also a fun time for us to play some collaborative games and get to know each other a bit better. I cannot wait to see what creative and thoughtful projects and ideas this group comes up with over the course of the year.



SCIENCE THEORIES



GROUP PROJECT



GEOGRAPHY



Welcome Back Meher families! I am incredibly excited about this year – the students, the staff, the new course offerings, and the many planned events, and even unplanned ones, that sprout from our curriculum.

For instance, our improved and enlarged garden will germinate this year thanks to Michael, Enzo Chavez's uncle, who joined our staff this year. Michael will assist our students in the art of growing plants, interspersing technical concepts, such as soil acidity and bio-communities with watering, digging, and harvesting. The students and staff are looking forward to beds of organic, healthy and delicious foods!

This year we are also cultivating a stimulating study of literature under the tutelage and mentoring of another new staff member Eli Chavez. Eli is a recent graduate of Occidental College, with a B.A. in English literature. In his calm and engaged manner, Eli passes his infectious enthusiasm for literature to the students. He uses a seminar-style class model with the students, dissecting literary elements and carrying on lively discussions related to the book's themes. Additionally, he is slowly and methodically introducing students to writing well structured and well formed literary analysis essays.

We also have the good fortune of having some teachers returning from last year – the perennials! Ms. E's Micro-economy class, Mr. Chavez's Biomimicry class, and Mrs. Chagoyas science class will bloom again, albeit with



some extra colors. For one thing, Ms. Espinoza has added a planning section - a time where she guides students through the process of materializing their ideas, whether it's business schemes or planning a winter ball. Mr. Chavez, for his part, has entered his Biomimicry class into a national design challenge, which asks participants to propose a blueprint for climate change adaptation and mitigation. Mrs. Chagoya, at the students' request, has added an hour and a half per week of class time to the study of Astronomy.

Already, our first few weeks of school have been strewn with amazing experiences, beyond the classroom walls. We hiked, really strolled, through the woods of the Arroyo in Pasadena, observing, identifying, and sketching plants, such as buckwheat, chia, and yucca. We also braided yucca leaves into strands of rope and learned that its leaves could be used for soap, which we used to clean our hands.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arroyo_Seco_\(Los_Angeles_County\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arroyo_Seco_(Los_Angeles_County))

We also journeyed to the Shumei center located in West Hollywood, <https://shumei-na.us/activities/shumei/hollywood> at the former home of the well-known journalist and writer Joan Didion. Shumei's mission is to spread natural agriculture and mindfulness-like practices. Their master gardener gave us a tour of their organic garden, sharing with us his ideas about growing food. Afterwards, Shumei students from Japan led our students in games and fed us a delicious meal of rice and vegetables grown in their garden.

It's been a stimulating start to the school year, and I'm guessing its bound to get better and better!

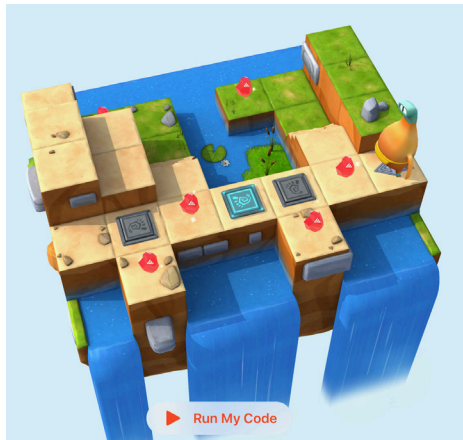


Swift Programming Coding Class by Mr. Page

"Today's students need to learn another language to be competent in the society as it is evolving today. We have a mission to teach all the 6th graders and Middle School students how to think like programmers and be able to express it in code. We use Apple's [Swift Playgrounds](#) program as our learning tool and the students learn the most popular new programming language in the world today - [Swift](#). All it requires is an iPad and downloading the free application.

The complete lesson below is one which the children will learn in a couple of weeks, following sections on Commands, Functions, For Loops and Conditional Code."

Decision Tree



Challenge: Test the state of the world to change your route.

For this last challenge, you need to collect the gems and toggle the switches along the center platform, but several paths take you away from it.

You can use **conditional code** to detect whether your character is on a gem or a closed switch, and take a different action if your character is on one instead of the other.

Example

```
for i in 1...5 {  
    moveForward()  
    if isOnGem {  
        solveRightSide()  
    } else if isOnClosedSwitch {  
        solveLeftSide()  
    }  
}
```

```
func first() {  
    turnRight()  
    moveForward()  
    moveForward()  
    moveForward()  
}
```

```
func second() {  
    moveForward()  
    collectGem()  
    turnLeft()  
    turnLeft()  
    moveForward()  
}  
  
for i in 1 ... 5 {  
    moveForward()  
    if isOnGem {  
        collectGem()  
        first()  
        turnLeft()  
    }  
}
```



Welcome to another year at Meher!

This year we welcomed nine new students to our class! They are Julianna Chew, Andrew Chuang, Maxine and Delilah Ho (twins), Sekou Johnson, Frankie and Nora Pepin-Harwitt (twins again!), Isaiah Talmor, and Nils Van Opstal. We would also like to welcome Milo Van Ness who started part-time for summer school. All of our new friends are in the 2-3-year-old age range. To help ease the transition, all of our new friends were partnered with a special helper the entire first week of class. Our first week was busy, but by Friday we could see a calm settling in over the whole class.

This year we have four graduates. They are all returning students. They are Westley Lim, Alexander Avetisian, Julius Horvitz and Eli Zuniga. They will be our leaders in the classroom with additional responsibilities like helping younger friends zip-up jackets, tie shoes, putting away materials, and opening containers for lunch.

Moving on, I would like to thank the families that attended Back to School Night on Thursday, September 13th. I find that BTSN is an important step in fostering your child's social relationships with his/her peers. Judging from the socialization I observed before and after

the meeting, I would say many of you parents felt the same way as well. Westley's dad is working on updating our parent roster, and that will be sent home shortly, if you have not already received it by the time of printing. For the families that attended, thank you for adjusting your schedule to make time to come. I know how hard it can be to coordinate time away from your children. Returning families, I try my best not to make things too redundant from year to year for you. At least you were able to enjoy different snacks this year!!

There are a couple of points I would like to touch on that were not in the BTSN packets for the parents that did not attend. First off, we are a Box Tops school. Please cut out any Box Tops you have and drop them off in the box on the coat rack. Alumni parent Christina Havholm did her due diligence and recruited Mabby Howard, Simon and Ida's mom (more twins!!), to be in charge of it this year. Each Box Top earns the school .10 cents. It may not seem like much, but it adds up.

Secondly, I am trying something new this year called Kindness Cards. If I catch your child being kind, I am going to write what I saw and mail him/her a surprise postcard. Please be sure we have your current address or these might get lost in the mail!! If your child receives a kindness postcard in the mail, please invite your child to bring it back to the school for me to read to the class. I

have already read one back, and the child was beaming as I shared his kind act to all his classmates.

Additionally, Miss Tinajero needs to practice giving lessons as part of her MISD training between now and next summer. So if your child goes home and says he/she received a lesson from Miss Tinajero, that is likely accurate. I am working with Miss Tinajero to help her pair the right lesson with the right child. This will be a year-long endeavor with her giving more lessons the more comfortable she becomes in student practice.

Finally, please be sure to read the "Altadena News" portion of the newsletter. Sometimes our dates vary from the dates of the Monterey Park Campus. As you can see, our section is in the back of the newsletter, it always is, so we're easy to find. Aside from what is happening in your child's classroom, information on upcoming events and special occasions can be found in the newsletter.

September 9th brought the beginning of Rosh Hashanah. I would like to thank Simon and Ida for bringing in the book Sammy Spider's First Rosh Hashanah, for the second year in a row. Many of our returning children remembered reading it last year and were excited to see it again. I would also like to thank Ida and Simon for bringing in honey apple muffins for a snack as a sweet way to welcome in the New Year. Once again, they were delicious and well received



by the class.

I have a couple of reminders before closing out this month's newsletter. First please remember that calling the school directly or emailing me is the best way to contact me during school hours. My cell phone number is only in the event that there is a power outage at school, which has been known to happen in windy Altadena, and I need to contact parents for early pickup.

Secondly, we provide milk and water for snack. If you would like your child to drink nondairy milk instead, please bring single serving containers that your child can independently retrieve from their lunch bags or that day's snack.

Finally, School Shirt Day is typically the last Friday of the Month. This month it is on Friday, September 28th. If all the children wear their school shirts on this day, we will celebrate with a baking activity in October. The October baking activity will be pumpkin cake.

Shanah, Tovah!
(Happy New Year!)

Mrs. Wildhaber,
Miss McCray & Miss Tinajero

OUR ALTADENA STAFF



Althea Wildhaber is our director/teacher at our Altadena

site. She has worked for Meher Montessori Schools off and on since 2000. She has worked in the Primary classrooms at both the Monterey Park and Altadena schools, as well as before and after school daycare. In addition to completing her required Child Development course, she has also earned an AA in Social Sciences from PCC. Althea graduated from The Montessori Institute of San Diego with her AMI Primary Teacher's Diploma.



Victoria McCray has been with the Meher Montessori

School since 1986. She completed her Child Development classes at Pasadena City College. Victoria is the assistant teacher in Mrs. Wildhaber's classroom and she also does the day care in the mornings, greeting the children and parents.



Johvana Tinajero started with us in February 2017 at our

Altadena school as an assistant teacher. Her daughter Julia, has been a student at Meher since she was two and a half. She has her associates degree in child development and her certificate in child development. She has previously worked for the Montebello School District and the Temple City School District. She just completed her first summer of AMI primary training.

THE DANGERS OF DISTRACTED PARENTING

Smartphones have by now been implicated in so many crummy outcomes—car fatalities, sleep disturbances, empathy loss, relationship problems, failure to notice a clown on a unicycle—that it almost seems easier to list the things they don't mess up than the things they do. Our society may be reaching peak criticism of digital devices.

Even so, emerging research suggests that a key problem remains underappreciated. It involves kids' development, but it's probably not what you think. More than screen-obsessed young children, we should be concerned about tuned-out parents.

Yes, parents now have more face time with their children than did almost any parents in history. Despite a dramatic increase in the percentage of women in the workforce, mothers today astoundingly spend more time caring



When it comes to children's development, parents should worry less about kids' screen time—and more about their own.

for their children than mothers did in the 1960s. But the engagement between parent and child is increasingly low-quality, even ersatz. Parents are constantly present in their children's lives physically, but they are less emotionally attuned. To be clear, I'm not unsympathetic to parents in this predicament. My own adult children like to joke that they wouldn't have survived infancy if I'd had a smartphone in my clutches 25 years ago.

To argue that parents' use of screens is an underappreciated problem isn't to discount the direct risks screens pose to children: Substantial evidence suggests that many types of screen time (especially those involving fast-paced or violent imagery) are damaging to young brains. Today's preschoolers spend more than four hours a day facing a screen. And, since 1970, the average age of onset of "regular" screen use has gone from 4 years to just four months.

Some of the newer interactive games kids play on phones or tablets may be more benign than watching TV (or YouTube), in that they better mimic children's natural play behaviors. And, of course, many well-functioning adults survived a mind-numbing childhood spent watching a lot of cognitive garbage. (My mother—unusually

for her time—prohibited *Speed Racer* and *Gilligan's Island* on the grounds of insipidness. That I somehow managed to watch every single episode of each show scores of times has never been explained.) Still, no one really disputes the tremendous opportunity costs to young children who are plugged in to a screen: Time spent on devices is time *not* spent actively exploring the world and relating to other human beings.

Yet for all the talk about children's screen time, surprisingly little attention is paid to screen use by parents themselves, who now suffer from what [the technology expert Linda Stone](#) more than 20 years ago called "continuous partial attention." This condition is harming not just us, as Stone has argued; it is harming our children. The new parental-interaction style can interrupt an ancient emotional cueing system, whose hallmark is responsive communication, the basis of most human learning. We're in uncharted territory.

CHILD-DEVELOPMENT EXPERTS have different names for the dyadic signaling system between adult and child, which builds the basic architecture of the brain. Jack P. Shonkoff, a pediatrician and the director of Harvard's Center on the Developing Child, calls it the "serve and return" style of communication; the psychologists Kathy Hirsh-Pasek and Roberta Michnick Golinkoff describe a "conversational duet." The vocal patterns parents everywhere tend to adopt during exchanges with infants and toddlers are marked by a higher-pitched tone, simplified grammar, and engaged, exaggerated enthusiasm. Though this talk is cloying to adult observers, babies can't get enough of it. Not only that: One study showed that infants exposed to this interactive, emotionally responsive speech style at 11 months and 14 months knew twice as many words at age 2 as ones who

weren't exposed to it.

Child development is relational, which is why, in one experiment, nine-month-old babies who received a few hours of Mandarin instruction from a live human could isolate specific phonetic elements in the language while another group of babies who received the exact same instruction via video could not. According to Hirsh-Pasek, a professor at Temple University and a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, more and more studies are confirming the importance of conversation. "Language is the single best predictor of school achievement," she told me, "and the key to strong language skills are those back-and-forth fluent conversations between young children and adults."

A problem therefore arises when the emotionally resonant adult-child cueing system so essential to early learning is interrupted—by a text, for example, or a quick check-in on Instagram. Anyone who's been mowed down by a smartphone-impaired stroller operator can attest to the ubiquity of the phenomenon. One consequence of such scenarios [has been noted by an economist](#) who tracked a rise in children's injuries as smartphones became prevalent. (AT&T rolled out smartphone service at different times in different places, thereby creating an intriguing natural experiment. Area by area, as smartphone adoption rose, childhood ER visits increased.) These findings attracted a decent bit of media attention to the physical dangers posed by distracted parenting, but we have been slower to reckon with its impact on children's cognitive development. "Toddlers cannot learn when we break the flow of conversations by picking up our cellphones or looking at the text that whizzes by our screens," Hirsh-Pasek said.

In the early 2010s, researchers in Boston

surreptitiously observed 55 caregivers eating with one or more children in fast-food restaurants. Forty of the adults were absorbed with their phones to varying degrees, some almost entirely ignoring the children (the researchers found that typing and swiping were bigger culprits in this regard than taking a call). Unsurprisingly, many of the children began to make bids for attention, which were frequently ignored. A follow-up study brought 225 mothers and their approximately 6-year-old children into a familiar setting and videotaped their interactions as each parent and child were given foods to try. During the observation period, a quarter of the mothers spontaneously used their phone, and those who did initiated substantially fewer verbal and nonverbal interactions with their child.

Yet another rigorously designed experiment, this one conducted in the Philadelphia area by Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, and Temple's Jessa Reed, tested the impact of parental cellphone use on children's language learning. Thirty-eight mothers and their 2-year-olds were brought into a room. The mothers were then told that they would need to teach their children two new words (*blicking*, which was to mean "bouncing," and *freping*, which was to mean "shaking") and were given a phone so that investigators could contact them from another room. When the mothers were interrupted by a call, the children did not learn the word, but otherwise they did. In an ironic coda to this study, the researchers had to exclude seven mothers from the analysis, because they didn't answer the phone, "failing to follow protocol." Good for them!

It has never been easy to balance adults' and children's needs, much less their desires, and it's naive to imagine that children could ever be the unwavering center of parental attention. Parents have always left kids to

entertain themselves at times—"messaging about in boats," in a memorable phrase from *The Wind in the Willows*, or just lounging aimlessly in playpens. In some respects, 21st-century children's screen time is not very different from the mother's helpers every generation of adults has relied on to keep children occupied. When parents lack playpens, real or proverbial, mayhem is rarely far behind. Caroline Fraser's recent biography of Laura Ingalls Wilder, the author of *Little House on the Prairie*, describes the exceptionally ad hoc parenting style of 19th-century frontier parents, who stashed babies on the open doors of ovens for warmth and otherwise left them vulnerable to "all manner of accidents as their mothers tried to cope with competing responsibilities." Wilder herself recounted a variety of near-calamities with her young daughter, Rose; at one point she looked up from her chores to see a pair of riding ponies leaping over the toddler's head.

Occasional parental inattention is not catastrophic (and may even build resilience), but chronic distraction is another story. Smartphone use has been associated with a familiar sign of addiction: Distracted adults grow irritable when their phone use is interrupted; they not only miss emotional cues but actually misread them. A tuned-out parent may be quicker to anger than an engaged one, assuming that a child is trying to be manipulative when, in reality, she just wants attention. Short, deliberate separations can of course be harmless, even healthy, for parent and child alike (especially as children get older and require more independence). But that sort of separation is different from the inattention that occurs when a parent is *with* a child but communicating through his or her nonengagement that the child is less valuable than an email. A mother telling kids to go out and play, a father saying he

needs to concentrate on a chore for the next half hour—these are entirely reasonable responses to the competing demands of adult life. What's going on today, however, is the rise of *unpredictable* care, governed by the beeps and enticements of smartphones. We seem to have stumbled into the worst model of parenting imaginable—always present physically, thereby blocking children's autonomy, yet only fitfully present emotionally.

Fixing the problem won't be easy, especially given that it is compounded by dramatic changes in education. More young children than ever (about two-thirds of 4-year-olds) are in some form of institutional care, and [recent trends in early-childhood education](#) have filled many of their classrooms with highly scripted lessons and dull, one-sided "teacher talk." In such environments, children have few opportunities for spontaneous conversation.

One piece of good news is that young children are prewired to get what they need from adults, as most of us discover the first time our diverted gaze is jerked back by a pair of pudgy, reproaching hands. Young children will do a lot to get a distracted adult's attention, and if we don't change our behavior, they will attempt to do it for us; we can expect to see a lot more tantrums as today's toddlers age into school. But eventually, children may give up. It takes two to tango, and studies from Romanian orphanages showed the world that there are limits to what a baby brain can do without a willing dance partner. The truth is, we don't really know how much our kids will suffer when we fail to engage.

Of course, adults are also suffering from the current arrangement. Many have built their daily life around the miserable premise that

they can always be on—always working, always parenting, always available to their spouse and their own parents and anyone else who might need them, while also staying on top of the news, while also remembering, on the walk to the car, to order more toilet paper from Amazon. They are stuck in the digital equivalent of the spin cycle.

Under the circumstances, it's easier to focus our anxieties on our children's screen time than to pack up our own devices. I understand this tendency all too well. In addition to my roles as a mother and a foster parent, I am the maternal guardian of a middle-aged, overweight dachshund. Being middle-aged and overweight myself, I'd much rather obsess over my dog's caloric intake, restricting him to a grim diet of fibrous kibble, than address my own food regimen and relinquish (heaven forbid) my morning cinnamon bun. Psychologically speaking, this is a classic case of projection—the defensive displacement of one's failings onto relatively blameless others. Where screen time is concerned, most of us need to do a lot less projecting.

If we can get a grip on our "technoference," as some psychologists have called it, we are likely to find that we can do much more for our children simply by doing less—regardless of the quality of their schooling and quite apart from the number of hours we devote to them. Parents should give themselves permission to back off from the suffocating pressure to be all things to all people. Put your kid in a playpen, already! Ditch that soccer-game appearance if you feel like it. Your kid will be fine. But when you *are* with your child, put down your damned phone.

Erika Christakis is the author of [*The Importance of Being Little: What Young Children Really Need From Grownups*](#).