



***Erdkinder* for Optimal Developmental Outcomes:  
Human and Planetary Wellness**

**A Week on the Farm - Adolescent Studies Emerging from Practical, Purposeful Work**

**July 24-28, 2023**

**Millstream Farm, New Hartford, CT**

We invite you to experience nature's diversity, tranquility, and the agricultural life of Millstream Farm, New Hartford, CT that serves as the prepared environment for adolescents aged 12-15 at the Montessori School of Greater Hartford. The farm, with its historic barn, forests, fields, gardens, waterways, and farm animals is a place where practical work and educational studies synthesize for meaningful, interdisciplinary knowledge and well-being. The five-day workshop will explore how to derive explicit studies from project-based work in a dynamic adolescent community, where moral and social development, community contribution, and living in harmony with one another and with nature are vital life experiences.

*"The first reform in education must be to offer a wider environment and to multiply the possibilities of association and of activity"* (Maria Montessori: *From Childhood to Adolescence*, 89).

- Day 1** [Farm purpose: for the evolution of farm-based Montessori education from genesis to modern emphasis, 2000-2023](#)
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## Day 1: Farm purpose: for the evolution of farm-based Montessori education from genesis to modern emphasis, 2000-2023

Today's progressive educational approach adds a biocultural and bioregional dimension to Dr. Montessori's concept of the prepared environment, an expanding dimension that is essential to adolescents. As children progress through adolescence, and as the prepared environment begins to approximate an adult environment, the "materials" become less defined while social consciousness and engagement with a wider world beyond the classroom and broader farm-based activities become more central. Referring to children and adolescents, Maria Montessori posed the question, "How can one widen the circle of his social interests?" (*Citizen of the World* 30). A progression of expansions characterizes Montessori Adolescent education, with notable extensions of the physical environment, of social cooperation, of practical life, and of general education. Maria Montessori wrote that "the aim should be to *widen* education instead of restricting it" (*From Childhood to Adolescence*, 71). Bioregional experiences radiate outward from the prepared farm environment to local communities, counties, states, countries, and ultimately the world. Biocultural experiences become salient exchanges between places and people, or between ecosystems and human society, with a goal of mutual well-being. The farm is never static.

8:30am Arrive at Millstream Farm

8:30-9:00 Farm chores and projects

9-9:30 Introductions

9:30-10:30 Tour of the grounds

10:30-11 History of Millstream Farm

11-12 Evolving uses of the farm since Hershey Montessori's genesis in 2000

12-1 Lunch and break

1-2 Earth speaks --acclimatization to nature on the farm, tied to Story of the Universe

2-2:30 Formal studies emerge from practical and physical work: An overview

2:30-4 Example 1 - the goats

- hands-on activity (make goat milk cheese)
- general connection to social and moral development
- general connection to cultural and biological interdependencies
- discovering interdisciplinary connections
- community contribution

4-5pm Holistic Outcomes beyond Performance Outcomes and Competencies

## Day 2: Farm purpose: for networked, interconnected knowledge

8:30am Arrive at Millstream

8:30-9 Farm chores and projects

9-10 What is *general education*? - key concepts, lessons, terminology in line with deductive reasoning from general to specific and inductive going from detail to general

10-11 True student-centered work and study

11-12 Adolescents' small-business enterprise

12-1 Lunch

1-3:30 Studies emerge from practical and physical work:

Examples:

The apiary

Local soapstone (steatite): Native American stone tools

- hands-on activity
- general education - key concepts, lessons, terminology attached to work study
- connection to social and moral development
- connection to cultural and biological interdependencies
- connection to economics and social development
- interdisciplinary connections
- community contribution

3:30-5pm: Art of the seminar and seminar discussion of *To Educate the Human Potential*

## Day 3: Farm purpose: for creative expression, contemplation, and reflection

8:30am Arrive at Millstream

8:30-9 Barn chores and projects

9-10 The prepared environment that supports adolescent sensitivities

10-11 Spiritual preparation of the adults: implicit and explicit lessons

11-12 Creative expression and physical wellbeing

12-1 Lunch

1-2:15 Art

2:15-3:30 Music

3:30-5pm -Theater

5-7 Break

7pm Guided by Nature exhibit: parallel age groups & the outdoor prepared environment

## Day 4: Farm purpose: for peace, environmental & social justice, and sustainability

Compatible with Montessori theory, farm-based education cultivates a unity of knowledge, broad social organization, a feeling of belongingness to place and time, and individual identity in the context of society. Laurie Lane-Zucker, a well-known advocate for place-based education, called it “the pedagogy of community, the reintegration of the individual into her home ground and the restoration of essential links between a person and her place.” In his seminal book, *Place Based Education*, David Sobel captures the interdisciplinary richness and roundedness of this approach, describing it as “the process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and the other subjects across the curriculum.” It is at the crossroads of human collaboration for wellness, ecological literacy, and broad-based *general* education.

8:30am Arrive at Millstream

8:30-9 Barn chores and projects

9-10 Adolescent summits, global implementation

10-11 Peace and biodiversity trip to Costa Rica

11-12 Sustainability

12-1: Lunch

1-2 Farm for peace, environmental & social justice, sustainability

2-4 Discovery of study from practical and physical work: Example 3 the woods/forest

- hands-on activity (calculating a tree’s carbon storage capacity)
- general education - key concepts, lessons, terminology
- connection to moral development
- connection to cultural and biological/abiotic interdependencies
- connection to peers, social development, bonding
- interdisciplinary connections
- community contribution

4-5pm Seminar discussion: ecology

## Day 5: Farm purpose: for human solidarity, independence and interdependence

Dr. Montessori's concept of expanding the prepared environment is a new dimension that becomes essential to adolescents. The Third Plane environment is unique in its broader conception of physical, social, and farm community and emergency sustainability. Montessori anticipated this dimension when she advocated for widening the prepared environment at each successive plane of development. Pedagogy of place is a derivative term used by progressive ecologists (not a Montessori term), which connects farm learning with today's sustainable skills aligned to the future survival of the whole earth.

8:30am Arrive at Millstream

8:30-9 barn chores and projects

9-10 Interdisciplinary connections

10-12 Rotations in small groups to work on:

- Farm lunch preparation
- The preparation of a lesson, inspired by the land, that reflects interdependencies

12-1: Lunch

1-3 Presentations of lessons (see above; land and people interdependencies)

3-4: Coffee house

4-5pm Earth Speaks II and closing

## Conclusion

At all Montessori Planes of Development, the prepared environments, along with the adult guides and the materials, generate a unique pedagogy. At the Third Plane, the prepared environment centers on the farm, residential living, a store, a guesthouse, and a machine museum, but it is an expanding realm, one that radiates outward, extending to wider communities and “unprepared” settings. The education that emerges from close, experiential engagement with people, communities, and ecosystems is pedagogy of place, which by its very nature is interdisciplinary. As in life, all systems depend on one another and on an understanding of the interrelatedness among all disciplines. The synthesis of detailed studies is encapsulated in a place, and the analysis of the place is understood by the details of its characteristics. From a small Montessori prepared environment to the giant universe, a place is a whole as well as the parts of the whole. In their adaptation to place, adolescents arrive at a comprehension of the world as a unified whole, with concentric circles and interconnected systems. First Plane sensorial education, Second Plane cosmic education and Third Plane social education converge as one.

### Workshop Leader

**Caren Ross** has started and taught at farm-based Montessori adolescent communities in Connecticut for seventeen years since taking the NAMTA 12-18 Orientation to Adolescent Studies in 2005. She is participating in the AMI 12-18 Training of Trainers program under trainer Guadalupe Borbolla in Mexico, where she has worked as an adviser in the new AMI 12–18 diploma course. A Spanish and Psychology graduate of Tufts University in Massachusetts. Caren also holds a master’s in international Affairs from Columbia University, with specialties in Iberian studies and journalism. For many years, she worked for the wire service Reuters, in New York, reporting news from the United Nations. In addition, having served for many years on the board of the local Land Trust and as Chair of the New Hartford Open Space Preservation Commission, Caren fully embraces the land-based model of education that Maria Montessori outlined for the adolescent plane of development.

### Visiting Expert

**David Kahn** is Executive Director Emeritus of the North American Montessori Teachers’ Association and Co-Director Emeritus of Montessori Development Partnerships. He holds a bachelor’s degree in fine arts and classics from the University of Notre Dame (Indiana) as well as the AMI Montessori elementary diploma from Bergamo, Italy. Kahn has served as a director for non-profit Montessori management organizations over the last forty years. He has seventeen years of Montessori teaching experience, twelve of them as teaching principal at Ruffing Montessori School (Cleveland Heights, Ohio). He was founding director of the Hershey Montessori School’s Adolescent Community in Huntsburg, Ohio, and of Montessori High School at University Circle (Cleveland, Ohio). Kahn developed The AMI Montessori Orientation to Adolescent Studies, consults with schools that are beginning Montessori farm or high schools, and has worked in public school districts adapting Montessori adolescent teacher development. He has been a fellow for Hartford University Montessori Center (Connecticut) and a presenter at an experimental foundation course called Core Principles at MINT, Dallas, Texas, Training Centre. Kahn also creates and collaborates on film and written publications showcasing Montessori innovation and implementation in both the public and private sectors and has created two major museum exhibits accenting the social and ecological directions of the Montessori movement.