



**Trust for Learning**  
Ideal learning made real for all.

---

September 19, 2018

Dear Mr. Bezos and Day One Fund:

Trust for Learning was thrilled to learn about your investment in bringing Montessori-inspired education to low-income children through the Day One Academies Fund. At the Trust, we share in your vision of creating high-quality early childhood education experiences where “the child is the customer,” and believe that the Academies Fund will play a critical role in scaling high-quality early education approaches in underserved communities across the United States.

The Trust’s board consists of foundations and individuals at the forefront of advancing child-centric, highly developmental learning. As a collaborative grant-making fund, we have worked with multiple partners to increase access to Montessori and other highly developmental, child-centric early learning approaches including Reggio Emilia, Waldorf, Bank Street, and others. Our efforts have yielded significant results and lessons learned, which we are happy to share with you as you embark on this impressive initiative. There are three areas, in particular, where we believe that we can be of help: Montessori infrastructure, program and policy expertise, and consumer research.

### **Montessori Infrastructure**

Eight years ago, our journey started with the Montessori field. The reasons for this are simple—as you know, Montessori is one of the most powerful and transformative approaches for giving children the skills they need to thrive in school and life. The importance of helping children develop executive function skills, social–emotional awareness, and academic skills cannot be overstated. The Trust has been convening leaders of the major Montessori organizations around the country together, into what is now called the [Montessori Leaders Collaborative](#). Like you, they envision a future where Montessori education is available to all children, regardless of their socio-economic status, and are working to achieve this through initiatives like [Access Montessori](#), [the Montessori Public Policy Initiative](#), and through the development of classroom quality assessment tools [like the DERS](#). Montessorians have networks ready for expansion, teacher training pipelines, and initiatives underway to bring quality early childhood experiences to more and more diverse communities. There has also been a recent profusion of Montessori research undertaken, including a \$3 million study by a Trust for Learning partner, the Brady Education Foundation, funded and launched this fall. In short, the Montessori Leaders Collaborative is ready to advise and act on scaling high-quality Montessori for children who need it most in this country.

### **Program and Policy Expertise**

Our convening work extends beyond Montessori—we also regularly bring together some of the most high-performing, like-minded developmental early learning providers in the country as part of the Ideal Learning Roundtable. This field—which includes Montessori, Reggio Emilia, Friends Center for Children, Waldorf Education, Bank Street, HighScope, All our Kin and Tools of the Mind, among others—has coalesced around a set of [Ideal Learning Principles](#) that puts the child at the center, is personalized, nurturing, hands-on, and focuses on purposeful, guided play. The focus here is on high quality for all children. In addition, the Trust has significant policy expertise to help influence changes that will enable greater participation of Montessori and other Ideal Learning providers in publicly funded state and local early childhood systems.



# Trust for Learning

Ideal learning made real for all.

## Consumer Research

Last year, the Trust completed the first-ever [Parents as Consumers of Early Childhood Education](#) research, which looked at parents' aspirations for their children and the desired attributes and benefits of early childhood education programs. While we believe as you do that the child is the customer, the parent is the consumer, and it is critically important to understand and meet their aspirations and needs. Conducted by one of the country's foremost consumer research firms, the insights affirm that parents, regardless of socio-economic status, want Ideal Learning for their children. The research has provided advocates with justification to insist on the highest-quality programs for all and is changing the way programs engage low-income parents and address issues of equity. We are happy to share this research, as well as the in-depth data behind it, which includes a comprehensive map of parent motivations.

As funders, we recognize that the challenge is so big that none of us can do it alone. Therefore, we respect and support individual initiatives while advancing collaborative efforts to make greater and quicker progress. Together, we have helped developmental learning providers grow their field, build their capacity to scale their programs, and influence policies and practices to bring Ideal Learning programs into the public sector.

We are eager to connect you with our network of funders, experts, Montessori programs and others that can quickly help with the formation of the Academies Fund network and contribute to its success.

We look forward to speaking with you. Please contact the Trust at (203) 349-3434 or at [info@trustforlearning.org](mailto:info@trustforlearning.org).

In partnership, signed,

Trust for Learning Partners:

### Trust for Learning Board Members

Marianna Kulak McCall, Trustee, McCall Kulak Family Foundation and Founding Partner, Trust for Learning

Eric Buchanan, Director of Strategic Partnerships, Buffett Early Childhood Fund

Libby Doggett, Education Consultant and Former Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and Early Learning at the US Department of Education

Serena Connelly, Trustee, Harold Simmons Foundation

Elizabeth Pungello Bruno, Ph.D, President, Brady Education Foundation

Barbara Crocket, Executive Director, Brady Education Foundation

James Walton, Trustee, Wend Ventures

Nora Flood, Education Director, Wend Ventures

Alex Johnston, President and Founder, Impact for Education

David Nee, Education Consultant and Former President of William Casper Graustein Memorial Fund

Ania Czekaj Farber, Founding Board member of Trust for Learning



# Trust for Learning

Ideal learning made real for all.

---

## **Montessori Leaders Collaborative members:**

Munir Shivji, Board President, American Montessori Society (AMS)  
Dr. Timothy Purnell, Executive Director, American Montessori Society (AMS)  
Dr. Sharon Damore, Board, American Montessori Society and Founding Member of Montessori Public Policy Initiative  
Jennifer Davidson, Board member, Association Montessori Internationale (AMI Global)  
Molly O'Shaughnessy, Board member, Association Montessori Internationale (AMI Global)  
Debby Riordan, Executive Director, Association Montessori International – USA (AMI-USA)  
Dr. Jackie Cossentino, Director of Research, National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector (NCMPS)  
Tim Seldin, President, Montessori Foundation and Chair, International Montessori Council  
Dr. Rebecca Pelton, Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE)  
Wendy Shenk-Evans, Executive Director, Montessori Public Policy Initiative (MPPI)  
Sue Pritzker, Past Chair and Founding member, Montessori Administrators Association  
Faybra Hemphill, Founding Board Member of Montessori for Social Justice and Director of Racial Equity, Curriculum and Training at City Garden Montessori School  
Jacquie Maughan, Board, North American Montessori Teachers Association

## **Ideal Learning Roundtable members:**

Jackie Cossentino, Director of Research, National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector  
Wendy Shenk-Evans, Executive Director, Montessori Public Policy Initiative  
Denise Monnier - Director of State Advocacy, Montessori Public Policy Initiative  
Barbara Acton, Co-chair, North American Reggio Emilia Alliance  
Margie Cooper, Ph.D., Co-Chair, North American Reggio Emilia Alliance  
Sarah Arnold, Board member, Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America  
Liz Beaven, Ed.D. President, Alliance for Public Waldorf  
Dr. Elena Bodrova, Co-Founder, Tools of the Mind  
Dr. Deborah Leong, Co-Founder, Tools of the Mind  
Allyx Schiavone, Director, Friends Center for Children  
Emily Sharrock, Deputy Executive Director, Bank Street Education Center, Bank Street College  
Virginia Casper, Ph.D., Interim Dean of the Graduate School of Education Bank Street College  
Iheoma U. Iruka, Ph.D., Chief Research Innovation Officer and Director of Center for Education Evaluation, HighScope Educational Research Foundation  
Dr. Cheryl Polk, President, HighScope  
Jessica Sager, Co-Founder and CEO, All Our Kin  
Nilda Aponte, Provider Showcase Director, All Our Kin