

## 1000 Cranes Community

This community name comes from an ancient Japanese legend. According to the legend, anyone who diligently folds a thousand origami cranes, connecting them with a thread, will be granted a special wish or a lifetime of good fortune.

### **Lead Teacher**

Ms. Yukie is originally from Okinawa, Japan and has been living in the Chicago area for many years. Ms. Yukie has been part of the school community for more than 20 years, joining the school as a Japanese teacher at our original location in Oak Park in 1998. In 2001, she received her American Montessori Society Teaching Certification for children 3-6 years through Seton Montessori Institute. In 2019, she became the school's Primary Program Director. In this role, she provides mentorship and support to our primary teaching staff, and provides leadership in support of our Montessori and Language vision. Her experience and expertise are incredible assets to Intercultural Montessori.

Ms. Yukie is the proud parent of an Intercultural alumnus. She enjoys spending time with her family and pursuing creative hobbies such as sewing. She also plays a traditional three string instrument called "三線." This instrument comes from her home town of Okinawa, Japan.

### **Remote Teacher**

Ms. Mio Murodate was born and raised in Nagoya, Japan. Ms. Mio received a B.A. in German Studies with an emphasis on Second Language Acquisition and Foreign Language Pedagogy from Nanzan University in Nagoya. After teaching Japanese, English, and German to diverse groups of students from age 2 to adults in Japan and the U.S., Ms. Mio earned Master's degree in Bilingual-Bicultural Education at DePaul University. While her specialty is Japanese Language and Culture teaching, she is also trained in ESL/Bilingual teaching. Ms. Mio is in the process of completing her Montessori certification for children 3-6 years through Seton Montessori Institute.

Ms. Mio came to Intercultural Montessori as an assistant teacher in 2017. Ms. Mio's goal is to share the joy of learning with her students. When she is not teaching, she likes to walk her labradoodle in the neighborhood of the western suburbs where she lives with her husband.

**Assistant Teacher**

Ms. Hiromi Rath is originally from Kanagawa, Japan. She came to Intercultural in 2019 with a wealth of experience. Ms. Hiromi taught Kindergarten and preschool for over six years in Yokohama Japan. She brings a warm, calm presence to the classroom and has connected beautifully with our students. She is a patient and kind teacher who helps students practice their Japanese language skills by encouraging them to share their thoughts in conversation. Ms. Hiromi is the proud mother of a high schooler. In her free time, she likes to attend her son's baseball games and work on crochet projects.

## **Daniela Stefancu Community**

This community is named in remembrance of a former leader of our school who was a bright force behind Intercultural's development as an organization. Daniela Stefancu was deeply committed to our mission and was an inspiration to parents and staff. She could often be heard inviting parents to "Come see the beautiful things happening at our school!"

**Lead Teacher**

Ms. Mirella Carreno has been working at Intercultural Montessori since 2004. Mirella has an Associate's degree in Early Childhood Education from St. Augustine College and is pursuing a Bachelor's of Arts in Early Childhood Education from National Louis University. Mirella is Montessori certified to teach students 3-6 years old, and she brings a wealth of experience and knowledge of Montessori education to the school community. Ms. Mirella creates a nurturing and enriching classroom environment. She is dedicated to the academic success of her students and achieves this goal by calmly moving them through the Montessori curriculum.

**Assistant Teacher**

Ms. Laura Cazares came to Intercultural in 2016 as an Extended Day Teacher. She is a graduate of Benito Juarez High School in Chicago and studied Education at Harold Washington College. As a teacher, the most important thing for her is that the children are happy. She believes students learn best when they are joyful and content. She is a Chicago native who grew up in the West Loop neighborhood. When not at Intercultural, Ms Laura is a busy mother of five children.

## Giardino dei Bambini

Meaning ‘The Children’s Garden’ in Italian, the name of this community recalls Maria Montessori’s school, The Children’s House or Casa dei Bambini where she designed and implemented her revolutionary teaching methods. The teachers of the Giardino dei Bambini community see children as flowers in a garden which they can nurture and help to bloom.

### **Lead Teacher**

Ms. Verónica León Godoy is originally from Hidalgo, Mexico and has been living in the United States since 2013 in New York, Boston, and Chicago. Ms. Verónica received her Bachelor’s Degree in Tourism Administration from Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Hidalgo. Ms. Verónica joined Intercultural Montessori as an Assistant Teacher in 2017 with four years of previous experience working with children 6 months to 8 years old. Ms. Verónica is currently in the process of completing her Montessori certification for children 3 to 6 years through Seton Montessori Institute. “I believe each child embodies a unique and wonderful spirit. My aspiration is to see children grow into adults who are independent, responsible, and compassionate innovators.”

### **Assistant Teacher**

Ms. Monica Rodriguez is originally from Morelia, Mexico and has a Bachelor’s Degree in Education from Escuela Normal Urbana Federal College. Ms. Monica is a calm and compassionate force in the classroom and is beloved by her students. She brings a great deal of experience as she has been teaching since 1992 and has been at Intercultural since 2013.

## Rafael Cordero Community

This community is named after an inspirational figure known as ‘The Father of Public Education’ in Puerto Rico. Although he came from challenging circumstances and was self-taught, Cordero developed a love for literacy and committed himself to educating others. In 1810 he opened a school which provided free education to children regardless of their race and social or economic status.

### **Lead Teacher**

Ms. Gina has been at Intercultural since 2002. She is an experienced and compassionate teacher with years of experience educating young children in Montessori Method. She is a

Montessori certified teacher for children aged 3-6 years, and she holds an Associate's Degree in Early Childhood Education and a Bachelor Degree in Psychology from St. Augustine College in Chicago. Ms. Gina's expertise lies in combining language immersion with Montessori education; she is an invaluable asset to Intercultural. Ms. Gina is passionately committed to making sure her students reach their full potential within a nurturing and joyful classroom environment.

### **Assistant Teacher**

Ms. Erika Avila is a bilingual Chicago native. In 1995 her parents gifted her and her siblings an experience of a lifetime-an all Spanish education in Uruapan, Michoacán México. As a result, Ms. Erika is fluent in speaking, reading and writing Spanish, but most importantly she embraced her Mexican roots and culture.

Ms. Erika is a proud mother of two daughters Carolina and Paulina, both alumni of Intercultural. Carolina is now a Senior in high school and a member of both The National Honor Society and La Sociedad Honoraria Hispánica. Paulina is an honor roll sophomore in high school. Ms. Erika has been part of Intercultural since 2007, assisting in the Primary, Lower and Upper Elementary programs. Ms. Erika is compassionate and caring. Her most precious hobbies include devoted family time and capturing sunrises at 12th street beach.

*"Of all things love is the most potent"* -Maria Montessori

## **Yolot'si Community**

In Nahuatl, the indigenous language of the Aztec people, Yolot'si translates to "heart of the child." It is also used as a term of endearment and represents a loving community. This community is named in celebration of the heart each student brings to the classroom community. In the Montessori philosophy, the classroom is a loving and supportive learning environment where each child can grow as an individual.

### **Lead Teacher**

Ms. Lesly Hernandez Guerra is originally from Oaxaca, Mexico and she has been living in Chicago since 2014. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Foreign Languages from Universidad del Valle de Puebla, Mexico. Ms. Lesly has been working with children of 3-6 years old for over six years and has recently completed her Montessori certification for children 3-6 years through Seton Montessori Institute. She has connected deeply with the Montessori philosophy; her favorite quote by Dr. Maria Montessori is, "What the hand does the mind remembers".

**Assistant Teacher**

Ms. Ana Castillo grew up here in Chicago in a bi-lingual household. Ana earned a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and Latin American and Latino Studies from the University of Illinois at Chicago. She really appreciates the dual language component that Intercultural Montessori has to offer as she is a big believer that dual language in early education helps students learn about different cultures. Ana is proud to have family from Texcoco and Michoacán, Mexico.

Ms. Ana joined the Intercultural team in September of 2019 and has worked in our Extended Day Program and supported the school administration. Ms. Ana is known for her calm and patient demeanor when working with students and staff. In her free time, Ms. Ana loves to read, draw, and build puzzles.

## Ru Yi Community

The Chinese phrase *Ru Yi* translates to "may your wish be granted" or "as you wish". *Ru Yi* is also a ceremonial object which symbolizes good fortune in Chinese folklore. This community is named in honor of the many aspirations we have for our children and the good fortune they will bring to the world. The teachers of the *Ru Yi* community honor this name through supporting each student on their path of achievement and personal growth.

**Lead Teacher**

Ms. Xiaomeng Duan is originally from Tianjin, China and has a background in Musicology and Piano Performance. She earned a Masters Degree in Early Childhood Education from DePaul University and has a Certificate in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language. For her graduate thesis in Musicology, Ms. Xiaomeng studied the songs used in Chinese early childhood education.

Ms. Xiaomeng is in the process of earning her Montessori teaching certificate for ages 3-6 from Seton Montessori Institute. Before coming to Intercultural Montessori in 2019, Xiaomeng worked in a Montessori primary classroom and loves incorporating Chinese culture into her teaching. In her free time she enjoys playing and teaching piano, spending time outdoors, hiking and traveling.

**Assistant Teacher**

Mr. Ming Li is excited to join the Intercultural team in 2020. He is originally from Tianjin, China and came to the US in 2013. He earned a Bachelor's Degree at James Cook

University in Brisbane, Australia and a Master's Degree in Science from DePaul University in Chicago.

Ming has a background in technology and cyber security. He discovered his love for teaching through working as an ESL instructor in Tianjin, China for almost 2 years. He is currently in the process of earning his Montessori Early Childhood Teaching Certification from Seton Montessori Institute. Mr. Ming has connected with the Montessori philosophy and believes the goal of education should not be to fill a child with facts, but to cultivate their natural desire to learn. He is committed to providing a safe and caring atmosphere in which children feel comfortable to explore and learn.

In his free time, he spends time with his wife and young daughter and enjoys cooking, reading and volunteering for local animal shelters. He is also a certified drone pilot and enjoys capturing beautiful photographs using drone technology.

## Long Feng Community

The name of this community refers to the mythical creature from ancient China that is part dragon, part phoenix. The dragon and the phoenix are the principal motifs for decorative designs of the buildings, clothing and articles of daily use in the Chinese imperial palace. The use of Long Feng in design symbolizes good luck and happiness for all.

### **Co-Lead Teacher**

Ms. Ling Cao is originally from Hubei, China. She moved to the United States with her family when she was 16 years old and has been living in Chicago since 2018. She studied Studio Art at Central Community College of New Mexico and Media Art at the University of New Mexico. She has worked as a designer and interned at the MOMA museum. Ms. Ling has been teaching Chinese and art in different capacities since 2014. She taught at the Prospect Chinese Academy of New Mexico, part of the Confucius Institute. She also trained with the Hanban Chinese Ministry program and leads art and Chinese groups at Shine the Light Ministry of Chicago.

Ms. Ling is currently in the process of earning her Montessori Early Childhood Teaching Certification. She is influenced by Kristy Chu, a Taiwanese American Professor of Art; her philosophy is that being your authentic self will help you succeed. Using her creative background, Ms. Ling transforms her lessons into songs, games, drama, and uses crafts and storytelling to incorporate the foundations of Mandarin in her teaching. She truly believes that helping children find joy in learning, unlocks their potential.

**Co-Lead Teacher**

Ms. Yi is originally from Wuyishan, Fujian, China and came to Chicago in 2014. She earned a BA from Xiamen University in Fujian, China. She then attended Valparaiso University in Indiana where she earned an MA and studied Law and Fine Art. She is deeply connected to the art world and has a MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She has shared her love of art and Chinese culture through teaching painting, drawing, calligraphy and Chinese painting to children age 4, through college. She aspires to help students explore their interests and absorb knowledge in an organic way, without focusing on the process of learning. Ms. Yi is currently in the process of earning her Montessori Early Childhood Teaching Certification.

In her free time, Ms. Yi enjoys creating art in her studio and visiting art exhibitions with friends. She is also the mother of a young son and loves spending time with him. Yi is inspired by the words of Dr. Maria Montessori: "The hands are the instruments of man's intelligence" and Ludwig Wittgenstein who said, "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world."

## Yu Ying Community

The name of this community is a meaningful Mandarin phrase referring to the nurturing of talents and potential. The Yu Ying teachers embrace the meaning behind their community name by creating a nurturing environment where each student's unique gifts are celebrated and their interests are encouraged. With this attention and support, children develop into exceptional learners, well on their way to reaching their full potential.

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