



JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2026

The Albrook Almanac

Getting to Know You

by Mr. Fabrizio Porcinai



Fabrizio Porcinai, born and raised in Florence (Italy), is a passionate Montessori educator. He holds an AMS Montessori Elementary I-II Credential (MACTE Accredited) earned from the West Side Montessori School Teacher Education Program in New York City. He has taught in different school settings, including a Montessori public charter school in Washington, DC before his recent move to New Jersey. Over the years, he has also developed a strong interest in students with learning differences. He is currently enrolled in the Montessori Inclusion Endorsement Program at the same institution where he earned his Montessori credential, with expected completion in June 2026. Mr. Porcinai also earned a Bachelor of Arts in Linguistic Meditation, focusing primarily in Florence, Italy, graduating in

April 2018. He focused primarily on learning English and Spanish and he also has previous work experience as a translator.

Besides learning foreign languages, Mr. Porcinai also enjoys karaoke, salsa and bachata dancing, and, above all, watching anime in his free time. Mr. Porcinai brings a strong academic foundation, multilingual skills, and a thoughtful, inclusive, and globally informed perspective to his Montessori Elementary teaching practice.

A Garden of Growth: The Secret Garden Blooms at Albrook School

By Ms. Virk

There is something quietly magical happening in the Albers Hall at Albrook School these days. The Sieminski Theater is using the school's hall for rehearsal for the Secret Garden production. This beloved classic, with its story of hope,

Upcoming Events

March 7, 9-11 a.m.
Open House

March 19, 6-7 p.m.
Family Night

March 27, 7 p.m.
Spring Gala

April 3
Good Friday
School closed

April 10, 7 p.m.
Elementary Play

April 13-17
School Closed
Spring Recess
Expanded Care and SS+ in Session



The Albrook School

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friendship, and transformation, feels especially fitting for a school community rooted in growth. Even more special, this production brings together not only current Albrook students, Amelia and Eleanor Masi, but also several alumni, like Milo Lipman and Hannah Higgins, and Brantley Marshall, who have returned to the stage where their own journeys once began. As well as current parents and teachers: Angela Masi, director of this production; Maurice Marvi and our Mrs. Lauren Lipman, performers.

For the younger performers, sharing the stage with alumni has been both inspiring and comforting. The returning graduates, some now in middle school and beyond, bring experience and confidence, as well as warm memories of their own time at Albrook. They speak fondly of past performances and the teachers who encouraged them to take creative risks.

"It feels like coming home," one alum shared during a break in rehearsal. "This is where I first discovered how much I loved performing."

The production's director has focused not only on the show's technical elements but also on its heart. *The Secret Garden* tells the story of Mary Lennox, a young girl who discovers a hidden garden and, in the process, helps heal herself and those around her. At its core, the play is about connection, kindness, and the power of nurturing something with care, themes that resonate deeply within the Albrook community.



As opening night approaches, anticipation is building. Families, friends, and faculty are eager to see the result of weeks of dedication and collaboration. The show will run from March 13 to March 22, 2026. More than just a performance, this production of *The Secret Garden* is a celebration of community, past and present intertwined.

At Albrook School, the garden is not hidden. It is alive in the auditorium, blooming with talent, courage, and heart.



Pre K 2 Night

by Ms. Marvi

In January, the Pre K 2 children were invited to our Albrook Art Studio for a presentation on Pop Art in the United States. They learned about Pop Art as an artistic movement, and

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about the most representative artist, Andy Warhol. They focused on Andy, his life, and his artwork. The children made a collage based on one of his most well-known pieces, The Flowers. In this piece, Warhol printed a bunch of colorful flowers on a background of grass. The children thoroughly enjoyed this visit to our Art Studio. They completed their work after dining with their parents on the Pre-K 2 night.

While the children worked with Senora Zarate, parents joined Mrs. Tarangul and Mrs. Dignam for a presentation highlighting the advantages of the Montessori Kindergarten year at Albrook. The teachers discussed the curriculum and its many benefits, including leadership, which made the kindergarten year so unique. During the discussion, they outlined the various 'specials' classes that the children would enjoy. These include Art, Spanish, Music, Drama, and Physical Education. The parents had the opportunity to ask questions and explore a variety of the materials that the kindergartners explore. We were fortunate to be joined by former kindergarten parents who shared their personal experiences on how well prepared their children were when they moved on to new environments.



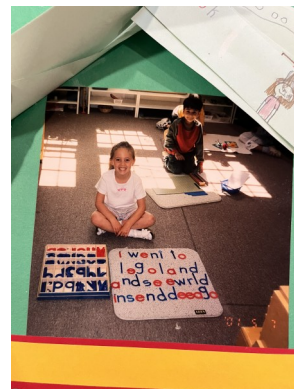
Getting to Know You

by Ms. Caroline Ingal

Before joining The Albrook School team, I lived in Boston, Massachusetts. I worked at a non-profit focused on workforce development in the Boston area. There, I worked as a career coach for an Early Childhood Education training program, and later transitioned to a role as a program assistant responsible for compiling reports on our programs' progress.

Joining The Albrook School team has truly felt like a full-circle moment. As an Albrook School alum (Stepping Stones through Kindergarten), I am grateful for the comfort and safety provided by the Albrook School environment, and I hope to carry this into the classroom to best support our students as they grow and learn. I especially look forward to supporting our students' movement and progress in gym class, where we have already built upon their coordination skills and sportsmanship.

Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with my sisters and other family, taking my dogs for long walks in one of our area's many great parks, or working on creative projects such as painting or sewing.



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Serving Those In Need, Collecting for The Somerset Food Backpack Program

by Ms. Vazaios and Ms. MacNeill

"An education capable of saving humanity is no small undertaking; it involves the spiritual development of man, the enhancement of his value as an individual, and the preparation of young people to understand the times in which they live." Dr. Maria Montessori

Each year, our students are encouraged to take on age-appropriate chores at home to earn money and purchase food for children experiencing food insecurity. The Somerset Food Bank supports more than 1,800 students across 25 schools, and we are grateful for the chance to contribute to this important work.

Thank you to all the students and families who generously donated the following items:

- O'Keeffe Room: Kraft Easy Mac & Cheese (boxes)
- Monet Room: 8 oz. milk boxes
- Degas Room: Canned tuna
- Miro Room: Small cold cereal boxes (1.2 oz.)
- Picasso Room: 8 oz. juice boxes
- Yeats Room: Small microwaveable beef stew cans
- Staff (optional): Individual snack treats
- Renoir Room: Chef Boyardee microwaveable pasta (7 oz.)
- Homer Room: Individual fruit or pudding cups
- Van Gogh Room: Individual microwave oatmeal packets

On Tuesday, January 20, our school community gathered to celebrate this collective effort. Together, we donated 393 pounds of food. We extend a special thank-you to Mr. Barak Shimon for volunteering his time to deliver all donations to the food bank.

The Somerset Food Bank reminds us that even in one of the wealthiest counties in America, more than 28,000 people rely on its support, with over 2 million pounds of food distributed each year. Families may need assistance for many reasons, due to illness, economic hardship, job loss, or unexpected events, and our continued support truly matters.

January Spirit Day: Honoring Kindness and Service

Montessori education places empathy at the center of a child's development. Each day, students learn to balance their own needs with the needs of others, to recognize their rights and responsibilities, and to understand what it means to "walk in someone else's shoes." Spirit Days give us a chance to pause and reflect on these values as a community.

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January's Spirit Day, which fell on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day, offered a meaningful opportunity to highlight how one person's actions can positively affect another's life. In preparation, students wrote an act of kindness, something they offered or experienced, on a paper dove. This simple activity encouraged thoughtful reflection on helping, comforting, and caring for others.

We also launched a school-wide project to support the Somerset County Food Bank's Backpack Program. On the morning of January 22, our entire school gathered for a community ceremony. After singing the Good Morning song, Ms. Vazaios welcomed everyone and invited elementary students to explain the mission of the Somerset Food Bank. Each classroom then presented its collected food items, which will be used to fill individual weekend meal bags.

Ms. Vazaios shared an eye-opening statistic: one in five children in our country may go without lunch or dinner on any given day. She demonstrated how just three dollars' worth of food can provide a child with breakfast, lunch, and dinner for an entire weekend, an impactful moment for our students.

We closed our celebration with peace songs led by Ms. Dignam and Ms. Fritsch, ending the morning with a strong sense of unity and purpose.

Career Milestone Celebration

by Ms. MacNeill

The Albrook School proudly acknowledges the impressive milestones reached by members of our dedicated staff this year. There was an unmistakable buzz of excitement in the air on Thursday morning, December 12, as our upper elementary students assisted Miss Virk and me in decorating and setting the tables for our annual staff celebration. Each year, the students lovingly help transform the space, creating an evening ambiance where teachers can sit together, relax, and enjoy a shared dinner and a glass of wine in appreciation of their hard work and commitment. This special gathering provided a meaningful opportunity to pause and acknowledge colleagues whose years of service have helped shape the heart and strength of the Albrook community.

We had the privilege of opening the ceremony by expressing our deep appreciation to Ms. Diane Ferguson, who was recognized for 30 years of service. Ms. Ferguson's strong work ethic, unwavering dedication, and passion, particularly her ability to keep us all moving forward in the ever-changing world of technology, continue to inspire us. She approaches every challenge with calm, grace, and professionalism, no matter the urgency. We were also honored to recognize Mrs. Fritsch for 25 years of love, care, and dedication to her students and to the Albrook School community. Her commitment to nurturing children and supporting their growth exemplifies the very best of Montessori education.

There is a timeless truth in the words of Henry Adams: "A teacher affects eternity; they can never tell where their influence stops." The strength of Albrook School is not often found in schools today, especially one that has served its community for so many years. At Albrook, length of service is often measured not just in years but in decades. What keeps our teachers here for so long? Perhaps it is the warmth of our community, a shared dedication to Montessori principles, a strong work ethic, or a deep belief in our mission and the vision of our founders. Whatever the reasons, we are incredibly fortunate to have such a devoted team that continues to grow, learn, and support one another. This was truly a special year as we celebrated these remarkable ladies for their loyalty, passion, and service. How fortunate we are to have such a wonderful staff, whose commitment continues to strengthen Albrook School for generations to come.



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PAMBE GHANA

Partnership for Mother Tongue-based Bilingual Education in Ghana

P. O. Box 47, Gambaga Northern East Region. Ghana

APPRECIATION MESSAGE TO ALBROOK SCHOOL

On behalf of students, teachers, parents and La'angum school community, I extend our heartfelt gratitude to Albroom School and your generous donors for your remarkable support. Your annual 5K walk in honor of your founder not only celebrated a legacy of vision and leadership but also reached across borders to uplift ours.

Through your kindness, we were able to construct a concrete volleyball court—an enduring gift that will inspire teamwork, healthy competition, and joy among our students for years to come. The court itself stands as a powerful symbol of friendship, solidarity, and shared commitment to education and youth development.

We deeply appreciate your thoughtfulness and generosity. Please know that your contribution has made a lasting impact, and we look forward to strengthening the bond between our schools as we continue to nurture the next generation together.

With sincere thanks,

La'angum Learning Center,

Bunboazio.

Programme Director,

Abdul Majeed Salifu.

Please go to the next page to see photos of the volleyball court and competition.

Contact us: pambeghana@gmail.com

Visit us at: www.pambeghana.org



December Expanded Care

by Mrs. Cheryl Fritsch

In December, the Expanded Care students squeezed in an extra day of fun at The Albrook School, and they made the most of every minute. They crafted adorable gingerbread houses, some from paper, some from graham crackers, all decorated with plenty of creativity before heading home. The chilly temperatures didn't stop the fun there. In the afternoon, in the gym, the kids built giant "houses" out of mats. They stretched their gross motor muscles with hula hooping, jump rope, and plenty of basketball dribbling and shooting. It was a day packed with imagination, movement, and lots of laughter.



DJ Night

by Ms. Lipman

On the evening of January 9th, elementary students and Albrook alumni gathered in Albers Hall for one of the year's most highly anticipated events: DJ Night. Many came in their fancy outfits complete with sequins, ready to dance the night away! Prior to the event, Ms. Ingal taught the students several line dances, so they were well-prepared when songs like "Cotton-Eyed Joe" or "Cha Cha Slide" came on. In addition to dancing and enjoying the music, students also played a variety of games led by the DJ. One highlight was the hula-hoop contest, where both Upper and Lower Elementary students demonstrated some very impressive skills! The evening ended with parents being invited onto the dance floor to join their children in the fun. It was a wonderful event enjoyed by all.

