



# Our History and Staff Team

## 2009-10

### **OUR STAFF TEAM**

#### Director

**Rina Woodfin** is a seasoned and certified Early Childhood Educator and Director. She has been teaching at MSP since 1993 and co-directing since 2002. Besides being a gourmet cook, Rina appreciates listening to Jazz and classical music, reading and spending time with her three children. She has greatly enhanced the cohesiveness of the staff team with organization, dedication and her delicious baked goods.

#### Afternoon Program Director and The Rabbit Class “nap” teacher

**Myrna Shadley** has a B. A. in Education. She has worked in Early Childhood Education since 1980, both as a teacher and Director. Myrna is also our Resource Specialist. She has been teaching at MSP since 2003. She is delighted to be part of the Mustard Seed community and enjoys getting to know the children and families in the Rabbit class. Myrna is a mom to six children and grandma to four. She enjoys gardening, spending time at the beach and being with her family.

#### The Rabbit Class “rester” teacher

**Monica Eng** [see below for her bio description]

#### The Roo Class Teachers (18 mos to young twos)

**Sharon Lee** is a certified Early Childhood Educator and has been teaching at MSP since 1993. She is a graduate of Sook Myong University in Korea, in Art. She is wonderful and warm with toddlers and creates strong bonds with them, inspiring trust and affection. She is calm and skilled in helping these toddlers transition through the separation process. She is fluent in Korean. Her excellent Korean cooking brings special warmth and laughter to our staff team.

**Candace Martinez** is a certified Early Childhood Educator. She taught here at MSP since 2001 and has also taught and directed at our sister school Little Sprouts in Oakland. She has a natural love of children and sets loving and kind boundaries with children in her care. She loves singing with children and has a song for everything. Candace has one child, Julian who is a year old. Candace enjoys walking her dog, hang out with friends and family and exploring different restaurants and cafes.

#### The Piglet Class Teachers (older 2-year olds)

**Monica Pelucchi** is a certified Early Childhood Educator. She has been teaching at MSP since 1996. Monica works diligently, patiently, creatively and flexibly with children. Her teaching combines love & humor with developmentally appropriate limits. She has a contagious enthusiasm and enjoys the outdoors and social gatherings. Monica is a dedicated teacher at MSP and a loving wife and mother to her husband and two children. She is a great cook and baker. She is Italian and speaks her language fluently.

**Jill Wang** has a BA in Public Communications from American University in Washington, DC where she also took Early Childhood Education classes. She has been teaching at MSP since 2007. Jill has two kids--both graduates of MSP and now attend LeConte Elementary in Berkeley where she is the PTA President. She also teaches Sunday school at Church Without Walls in Berkeley. Jill is thrilled to be teaching at MSP and sharing her love of children and God. Jill loves to read, take long walks, bake, go camping with her family and hang out with her girlfriends!

#### The Pooh Bear Class Teachers (young 3-year olds)

**Vicky Brodt** is a certified Early Childhood Educator. She has been teaching at MSP since 2000. Vicky also works with children's ministry at Berkeley Covenant Church. She brings a diverse and rich training in Early Childhood Education, along with her creativity, to the classroom. Also a certified horticulturist, she enjoys gardening, quilting, and spending time with her two kids; Sean (16) and Chelsea (8). She produces the MSP newsletter “Seedling”.

**Monica Eng** has Early Childhood units. She has been teaching at MSP since 2008, but she has years of experience working with toddlers and older preschoolers. Monica values the importance of creating a positive atmosphere that would nurture a child's growth and love for learning. She works well with a team and appreciates the dynamic of being mentored and in turn mentoring others. Monica has four children and is intentional about spending quality time with her family.

### The Tigger Class Teachers (older 3- to 4-year olds)

**Meri Thwaites** is a certified Early Childhood Educator and Director. She has been teaching at MSP since 1986 and has years of experience teaching the Pre-K class. Meri is warm-hearted, hospitable and humorous. She welcomes children and families into her life and keeps them in her spirit. She shares her gift of music and singing in the classroom and combines welcoming warmth with loving/healthy boundaries with the children. Meri is mom to three MSP graduates and grandmother of two, Johana and Jasaiah.

**Lorelei Agbayani** is a certified Early Childhood Educator and has a B. A. in Communication. This is her first year at MSP, but she has experience working with children ranging from infants to sixth graders. Her playful, gentle nature makes children feel safe and loved. Lorelei also enjoys learning about different cultures and languages. She is looking forward to getting to know the children and families at the Mustard Seed community.

### The Kanga Class Teachers (4- to 5-year olds)

**Kristen Matarazzo** is a certified Early Childhood Educator and has a B. S. in Fine Arts. She has been teaching at MSP since 2003. She taught Karate to children 4-11 year-olds at the Academy of Martial Arts. Kristen is a keen observer of children. Children feel an instant comfort with her and she balances humor with the setting of healthy boundaries. She is sensitive to provide activities that both encourage and challenge children to discover their potential. She is a leader and a ready public speaker. She enjoys reading, having coffee with friends and laughing.

**Helen Wu** is a certified Early Childhood Educator and Director. She has a B.A. in Art and Psychology and is currently working toward her Master of Fine Arts Degree. She has taught at MSP from 1989 to 1996 and co-directed the preschool from 1996 to 1999, before moving on to become the Children Ministry Director at a local church. Having raised her two sons to adulthood, Helen holds a deep passion for nurturing children and helping them to cultivate their multi-faceted potential. With her warm and loving nature, she brings a nurturing presence that children can readily sense in the classroom.

### Gymnastic & Music (for all morning classes once a week)

**Nathalie Sanchez** is a certified Early Childhood Educator. She comes with experience in dance, movement, singing and music, including two recorded albums. The gymnastic routines help the children build body-confidence, coordination, motor skills, strength, and flexibility as well as a love for movement. Each class includes a warm-up, followed by age-appropriate tumbling passes, obstacle course and large muscle movements that build integrated strength and coordination. Music class introduces children to songs, music & instruments, and rhythm and movements.

### Elective Classes

**Dance** (Mary Lyons): Mary was trained at the Royal Academy of Dance London, England. She had a dance school in Scotland for ten years. She has been operating "Dance Center One" in Walnut Creek. Ms. Lyons has been teaching dance at MSP for many years. With a passion for creativity and discipline, she is committed to teach dance to children of all ethnicity. In dance children learn a variety of activities in large and small groups, such as skipping, turn taking, posture and beginning dance positions for a variety of dance forms such as ballet, tap, and jazz.

**Karate** (Kristen Matarazzo): Kristen was the instructor and student at The Academy of Martial Arts for 6 years and is now training at Bay Mountains Martial Arts. Karate is a wonderful opportunity to help children strengthen their gross motor development, balance skills and space awareness and body coordination. Through the use of games and drills, children also learn self-control, perseverance, listening skills and team work.

**Spanish Immersion** (Janet Martorano): Janet was a chef and cooking teacher at Berkeley Montessori School. Teaching has always been enjoyable to her and it particularly brings her great joy and excitement to teach children in her native language—Spanish. Janet hopes to instill in children a love for learning the Spanish language and the Mexican culture. She intends to share with the children her knowledge of the Mexican culture and teaches them Spanish through conversations, songs, stories, games, and art activities. Her son Nick (18) and daughter Gabby (16) were once students at Mustard Seed Preschool.

**Cooking** (Janet Martorano): Janet started this class last year and it quickly became popular among the parents and children. This class encourages children to learn about healthy foods and nutrition through the experience of preparing the meals (breakfast, lunch, snacks, dinner and desserts) and then tasting them afterward. They also learn ways to safely handle kitchen utensils and other operating machines (like the oven or blender).

### Other Support Staff

**Laurie Fiddes** (Bookkeeper); **Elizabeth Liu** (Office Assistant); **Karen Davidson** (BCC Administrator)  
**Mustard Seed Committee:** Peter de Laveaga, Leanne Wydick, Laurie Fiddes, and Rina Woodfin.

## **HISTORY OF MUSTARD SEED PRESCHOOL**

Mustard Seed Preschool was founded in 1979 as a non-denominational, non-profit Christian school dedicated to excellence in education and nurture. Children from all faiths and backgrounds are welcomed. It has been operated by the Berkeley Covenant Church since 1986. One of the distinctive qualities of Mustard Seed Preschool is the strong sense of community and "family" created by the relationships between children, parents and teachers. The commitment and dedication of our staff to create a supportive and nurturing environment for families with young children has been, and continues to be, the strength of our school. We are also blessed with low staff turnover.