

10/3/08 *Notes From Nirvair*

At Khalsa Montessori School we have worked at building community in the classroom and in the organization. We have chosen an organizational structure which shares the values of the Montessori classroom community, and encourages cooperation, leadership, participation and contribution regardless of role or position. The role of the administrative team is different in an organization in which leadership is shared and the leader's role is to serve. At Khalsa School, administrators Siri Atma Khalsa, Datta Kaur and Peggy Jelks work behind the scenes to support the success of the children, the teachers and the school.

Siri Atma Khalsa has been administrative director at Khalsa School since 1993. The preschoolers Siri Atma attended in the office then are in college now. She coordinates office activities, daily schedules and logistics, oversees enrollment and serves as communications hub. Siri Atma also manages the early childhood program, the extended care and summer programs. Over the years, she has seen and participated in the evolution of the school from a small, home-based program to the environment you see today. Siri Atma is originally from Baltimore and has a bachelor's degree in mass communication and a masters degree in clinical social work, from the University of Maryland. She enjoys outdoor activities like hiking, running and spinning (indoor cycling).

Datta Kaur is program director at Khalsa School. She has been involved in education for over 35 years. She earned her Ph.D. from the University of Maryland and has taught all age levels from primary school to elementary to graduate school. She has three children of her own - all of whom are attending universities on the east coast. Datta Kaur raised her children on a farm in Upstate New York where she also operated summer camps and cared for a menagerie that included a llama and a monkey! This is her third year as administrator at Khalsa School. She coordinates middle school programs, special education and purchasing, supports classroom management and discipline policy implementation, oversees technology applications and contributes to staff development. In her words, "It was the excellence of what this school offers children and parents that lured me to work at Khalsa."

Peggy Jelks has been involved with Montessori education in Southern Arizona for eighteen years and has been at Khalsa School for about five years, first as a substitute teacher and now as curriculum director. She is fourth generation Arizonan and grew up in a ranching family. Her mother's family are pioneer settlers in and around Santa Cruz County and her great-great grandfather, Thomas Gardner, returned from the California gold rush to homestead Gardner Canyon on the east side of the Santa Rita Mountains. Peggy began homeschooling her five daughters on their SE Arizona ranch, the program evolved and she eventually founded three Montessori schools, two remain as charter schools. At Khalsa School, Peggy works directly with the teachers on program development, delivery of the curriculum, and classroom issues. She facilitates staff development and assistant training and coordinates the state testing each spring. Peggy also oversees the Camden campus.

We are grateful for each of these administrative team members and the unique talents and valuable service they contribute to Khalsa Montessori School.