

## Nightingale Partakes in AMS Research Presentation

The AMS Research Committee selected Nightingale Montessori's proposal for the Second Annual Research Poster Presentation at the American Montessori Society's 2010 conference in historic Boston this Spring.



Jeanne Nightingale at the Boston Conference

This was an opportunity to share with other Montessori teachers the results of a study, supervised by Dr. Mary Jo Zembar of Wittenberg University, that evaluated the effectiveness of Nightingale's *Sound Shapes Reading Program*. AMS was particularly interested how this method links Montessori practice to cutting-edge brain research.

Pioneered and tested at Nightingale since 1978, this early-childhood reading instruction program is particularly effective in facilitating the reading skills for children either diagnosed with, or predisposed for, dyslexia.

The strength of the Nightingale approach lies in the way it breaks down the learning steps into manageable increments, thus "isolating the difficulty" and "controlling the error." Introduced very early in the child's curriculum (age 3), the method presents a sequential chain of sound and shape concepts in order of progressive difficulty while taking care to maintain each child's challenge level. The early exposure to shapes and sounds may stimulate the creation of alternative neural pathways in struggling readers, but it also helps sharpen the fundamental cognitive skills that all children need to be successful readers and learners.

The evaluative study compared the literacy outcomes of different preschool reading programs in Montessori and non-Montessori students. Each student was evaluated during the fall and spring of the school year. The findings indicated that both Montessori and non-Montessori children who were instructed with *the Sound Shapes Reading Program* demonstrated significantly better sound recognition, sound to letter matching, and subsequent reading skills when compared to those children who were exposed to other reading programs. The unique features of this program may contribute to a superior understanding of how sounds map onto shapes, a fundamental building-block for successful reading and future learning.