

THE TOUCH BOARD



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Reaching out to the Community

- Aditi Ganesh

In an initiative to support the parent and teacher community during unprecedented times of the pandemic, the Indian Montessori Foundation (IMF) conducted webinars and brought out newsletters through the times of need.

The 11 webinars that were open to the public were scheduled for every Saturday through the months of May, June and July. AMI Trainers of the country spoke on various topics like self-discipline, independence, nature, movement and also about managing our day with a routine and using online resources. Each session was attended by around 600 participants who also put forward their questions at the end of the talk. Some of these questions were answered by the Trainers at the webinar while the rest were answered and posted on the IMF website in the donor's page.

8 newsletters were published and circulated on a weekly basis of Montessori principles that can be practically put to use at home to assist the child. This included the importance of routine, involving children in our daily routine, preparing a suitable environment for work, appreciating nature from one's balcony among others. The focus behind all these talks and newsletters ultimately revolved back to the child, who is on the path of becoming an independent and a contributing member of the society and how we aid this journey.



"Thank you, Team. I really look forward to your weekly newsletters. It helps many parents to have perspective. A big shout-out for such appropriate and timely help."

Sai Lalitha, Founder, Bumblebees Casa Dei Bambini

AMI Primary Orientation Course – Mumbai, Chennai & Pune

-Aditi Ganesh, Meera Ghelani & Kavneet Chadha



AMI Primary Orientation Course, formerly known as the Assistants Certificate Course, was conducted on online platforms in Chennai by Navadisha Montessori Foundation - NMF (June 17 to July 7), Mumbai by Ratan Tata Institute - RTI (June 1 to June 24) and in Pune by Sapling Diya Montessori (April 18 to May 4).

AMI Primary Trainers Neelima Mhaskar (Pune), Suneeta Madnani and Anahita Gandhi (Mumbai) and Hemalatha Rangarajan and Ramya Sridhar (Chennai), guided the participants from across the country through the journey of supporting the child of 3-6 years in his natural development both at home and at school.

Lectures, observation sessions and discussions in small groups were all done online with participants taking away ideas that can be practically implemented.

The participants from Pune felt they could relate so much with Montessori's philosophy and found her approach almost spiritual. The key things that stood out for them were putting our ego aside, practicing patience, being non judgmental and letting the child lead the way.

“The biggest takeaway is to continually support our children as prepared adults and learn alongside them on this lifelong parenting journey with love, patience, and compassion.”
Aparna Chari, Chennai



The participants from Mumbai shared their feedback that the trainers were warm and welcoming, making them feel like they belonged to a bigger family now and have evolved as better parents and individuals.



AMI Primary Course Graduation – Mumbai & Bangalore

- Meera Ghelani & Kavneet Chadha

The students of the 23rd AMI Primary Course at Sir Ratan Tata Institute (RTI), Mumbai and the first batch of the Primary Course at Montessori Institute of Bangalore (MIB), Bangalore made it to the finish line and graduated in March 2020.



A few students came back to accept their certificates in person from Zarin Malva, Director of Training, and take some photos together as souvenirs of the unforgettable roller coaster year.

Kavya Chandrasekar and Directors of Training (Suneeta Madnani, Rukmini Ramachandran, Anahita Gandhi, Teenaz Reporter; Trainer in training, Tania Fernandes) at MIB with the joyous student graduates of Bangalore.

“My batchmates and I graduated in the midst of a pandemic. We didn’t get to have a grand ceremony, nor did we get to say our goodbyes. But, we all knew that our bonds with RTI and each other were there to stay. It’s not about the destination, it’s about the journey. And my journey as a Montessori Trainee has given me more than I could have ever asked for.”

- Joanne Lopez, Graduate



Webinars - Bangalore

- Kavneet Chadha

Montessori in Our Home

By Janani Bhuvaneshwaran



a prepared space and a start to finish aspect of work for the child. The house can give a child a plethora of experiences involving sensory, movement, language and delving into these possibilities make the children thrive.

Janani Bhuvaneshwaran, trained at Primary and Infancy levels (0-3 years) held a webinar on May 11, 2020. She shared her journey with her 5 month old child and gave many ideas supported by her real life experiences. She focussed on the need to provide a joyful home where all emotions are acknowledged, giving children time and undivided attention and a prepared space giving them access to their surroundings to explore their immediate world to the fullest.

On July 4, 2020, Purti Doshi, trained at both Primary and Elementary Levels, addressed the needs of the elementary child (6-12 years). She shared several anecdotes from her daily family life and emphasized on creating a sense of responsibility, encouraging to think by themselves and building a bond with them.

“Purti’s ideas of practising writing skills in a fun way such as making a list for grocery items or storage box was an interesting takeaway”

Harshneer Chandra, Parent

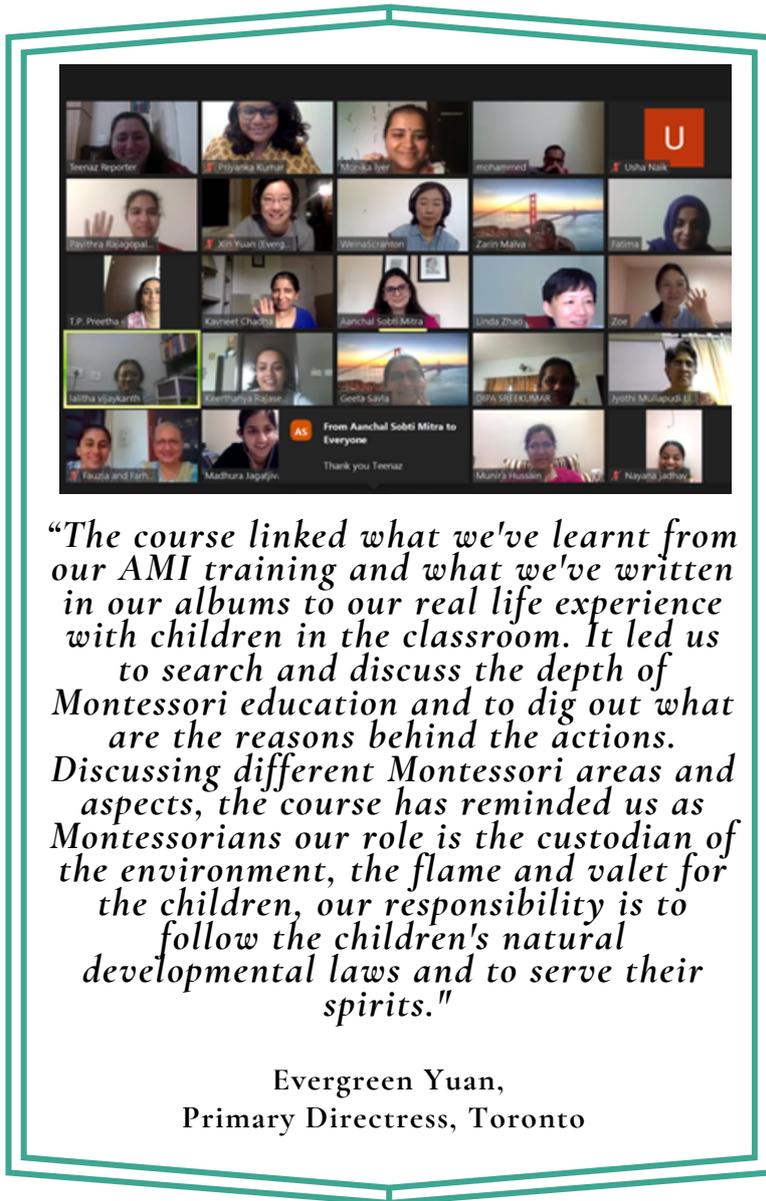
AMI Primary Refresher Course - Hyderabad

- Priyanka Kumar

The Online Refresher Course organized by Montessori Training and Research Trust (MTRT), Hyderabad that took place over two weekends (June 27/28, 2020 & July 4/5, 2020) was a fascinating experience with students from different parts of the world coming together.

Teenaz Reporter, the Director of Training, took us on a journey of the deep-rooted theory behind the practice of what we do, with the child as the focal point. We discussed the role of education across the four stages of development and ways of supporting the child for his self judgment, self correction and self control to flower, centred around the optimal preparation of the environment and the adult. The breakout sessions helped discuss common scenarios in the classroom and arrive at solutions as a group.

Albeit the course being online, it was a great opportunity to reconnect with old friends, forge new connections, and be supported by the presence of so many others with varying degrees of experience who share the common goal of the child, as both a 'hope and promise for mankind'.



'Montessori at Home' Workshop - Bangalore

- Prasanna Srinivasan



There is a philosophical belief that answers to all the questions in our minds are present right around us, we only have to look with awareness and they will jump out to us. This was true for many who attended the virtual workshop 'Montessori at Home' organised by the Montessori Institute of Bangalore (MIB). This workshop was facilitated by Rukmini Ramachandran, Director of Training at the Navadisha Montessori Foundation (NMF) and Ruby Lau, 3-6 trainer and AMI consultant at the NMF.

Conducted online over a two week period, between June 15-22, 2020 the workshop took the participants through various topics such as order and routine for the child, development of language and movement, what attention seeking actually means, motivation and how to support it and role of us as parents or adults in our children's lives. Some of the participants were also Montessori practitioners, bringing a lot of theory behind practicalities that we face everyday at work and at home.

“Even though I have done the primary course at RTI Mumbai, this course was rejuvenating and refreshing in these Covid times” reckoned Jasneet Bed, a participant from Mumbai. *“With this workshop, Rukmini and Ruby once again reminded us of the beauty that is Montessori - shedding new light and perspective on the Magic of Montessori”* says Ammu Menon, another participant from Bangalore. The workshop not only gave an overview of this blossoming personality of the child, but also little tips on how to handle certain situations such as tantrums or loss of motivation.

The workshop mainly considered the young child and how important the foundation years from birth to six was. As an elementary guide attending this workshop, it brought back home the importance of the first six years. However, the ideas explored and the experiences shared were so useful and could be layered for any age group. The workshop concluded aptly with the role of the adult and significant role it plays in the child's life, leaving more room for thought in the minds of the participants.

Remembering Joen Bettmann

Joen Bettmann was an inspiration to everyone in the Montessori community and will be deeply missed by her friends and colleagues. An AMI Primary Trainer, Examiner and Consultant, Joen had more than thirty years of experience in the education field. She also served as the Director of Training at the International Montessori Training Institute, Atlanta.

Her friends fondly remember Joen for her clever quips leaving everyone in peals of laughter, a passionate writer with love for commas - known as 'the comma queen', an art enthusiast carrying a picture of art wherever she travelled, an extraordinary guide to the children and a devoted family member.



Joen (in the middle) together with her friends and colleagues Janet Mconell and Molly O'Shaughnessy at the AMI Trainers Meeting, Rome 2010

“Joen once said how exciting it was to see the expansion of the number of trainers, and also the careful consideration extended to ensure that each person in his or her development is given thoughtful guidance. Joen wished to continue her life's work after her death by establishing a scholarship fund that will financially assist those Montessorians who are in their final year of becoming an AMI Primary trainer. The family invites you to help one of Joen's final dreams to donate to the fund <https://www.montessori-mggf.org/joen-bettmann-fund>.” - Lynne Lawrence, Executive Director, Association Montessori Internationale (AMI).

Zarin Malva, Director of Training at Ratan Tata Institute, shares her thoughts about Joen, *“A wonderful human being, a true friend and a great colleague. Though I miss Joen dearly, I dare not shed a tear for her, but will always remember her lovely smile and sense of humour, as I am sure she would have liked only that from us!”*

150 Years of Maria Montessori !

- Kavneet Chadha

Montessori was born on August 31, 1870 in Chiaravalle, Italy and even after 150 years of her birth we see her ideas resonate with the times we live in today. Respect for one another, respect for nature and the universality of human development are all ingrained in her method. A small document about Montessori's thoughts on technology, written during her years in India (1940-1947) about the use of mechanical aids in education, was found in the archives and published by Association Montessori Internationale (AMI). Some excerpts from the article :

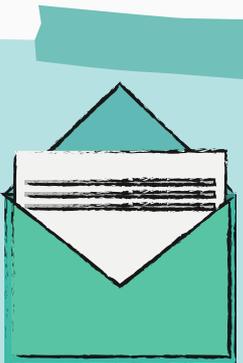


“In my opinion the advantage of mechanical aids of instruction in the schools of the future would be the following: the material, discourses and visual representations could be prepared by fascinating speakers and persons of a culture superior to that of the ordinary teacher. Also the slides and films could be prepared by specialists who would dedicate themselves to the task of rendering clear and interesting to the children the many cultural subjects thus presented.

I would like, however, to point out that these mechanical aids are insufficient to bring about the totality of education. Children do not learn and do not develop their character by merely listening and looking on. Auditory and visual aids therefore, although very important indeed, are only partial aids. The child learns by means of his own activity and if given an opportunity to learn actively he develops his character and personality too. ...Modern methods of education, in fact, are not only visual, but above all active.”

Source: AMI Journal 2015, Archival treasure publication <https://www.montessori-ami.edu.hk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/TreasureArticle2015.pdf>

Letters to the Editor



IMF Conference - Kriya 'Purposeful work, for Self and Society'

“Thank you for the coverage of the national conference, Kriya, in the March issue. I could not attend the conference, but the report helped me still get an overview of the event and feel connected to the IMF community. Such a relevant theme it addresses, as it is so important the children stay connected to, and aware of their society to bring some meaningful social changes.”

Vinu Palissery

The Racing Mind of the Second Plane

In this segment, Prasanna shares her thoughts and experiences of the elementary child of six to twelve years and how adults can support their racing mind and growing social and moral independence.



Prasanna Srinivasan has completed her AMI Montessori training at both Primary (3-6 years) and Elementary (6-12 years) levels. She belongs to the very first batch of both the courses at Navadisha Montessori Foundation. She has worked with children from both age groups in India and abroad and has been working at Navadisha Montessori School with elementary children since 2016. She enjoys using her spare time to read books. She feels extremely grateful to be working with children and loves the fact that this age group can have conversations just about anything in this world and their quest for information inspires her...

The Elementary Child – A Whole New Being

Robust, chatty, imaginative, always ready for a challenge, seeking out information, a bit of sense of humour or the lack of it sometimes, extremely social – these are a few of the qualities that might cross our minds when we think of a child between 6 and 12 years. For those who have worked or interacted with these children – there might be many more that could be listed. Who is this elementary child?

Dr. Montessori observed that development from birth to adulthood happened in four stages. Each stage being different from the other, having different needs and exhibiting different characteristics. Each stage has evolved from the previous one and is a preparation for the next. So where has this child come from? What is he/she preparing for?

This second plane child has built the foundation in the first six years of life and is preparing himself/herself for what we call adolescence. Much of the work in building their personality and adapting to the immediate environment; acquiring language and movement and independence, has been done in their first six years. Layering upon that foundation with the help of unique psychological characteristics is the task for this child.

Dr. Montessori, in *The Absorbent mind*, quotes J S Ross, an educational psychologist, who refers to the 6-12 year olds as children with “assured mental and physical stability”. He says that, if a being from another planet who has never met a human, chanced upon the ten year olds, they could easily assume that the ten year olds were the adults of this planet. Such is the capability of the second plane child.

Each plane of development is unique. If the younger child understood their world through senses, this child does it through their intellect. An intellect with immense potential to literally take on the world.

This coupled with characteristics such as the reasoning mind, moral development, power of imagination, extreme physical stamina, gregariousness, seeking an identity, make our 6-12 year olds a gold mine to be unraveled as future citizens of the world. However, supporting these in an optimum way is as essential too.

How do we reach or appeal to those characteristics?

The psychological characteristics may seem less evident, but the physical changes are more obvious and give clues about these intangible aspects. For instance, one of the most noticeable is the falling of milk teeth and appearance of the permanent ones. If keen attention is given, one might even notice the logical reasoning mind in conversations too – asking more ‘why’ questions. For instance, if one were to say to a seven-year-old – the leaves are usually green, he/she would want to know if all the leaves in the world are green, what makes them green or if they would still remain green even when they are dead.

Whether one is a teacher, parent or simply someone who interacts with this age group, it is important to understand that their needs are different and they are no longer going to accept what is being said without a logical reasoning. Working in collaboration is one of the ways to reach these children. Conversations that lead to collaboration of work in every aspect, whether at home, school or the outside environment may lead them to become part of the real adult world. By opening up the world through stories could be another way. Stories appeal to all the psychological characteristics of the second plane child.

What kind of stories? Now that is a story for another day!

Nurturing Independence - A Parent's Experience

- Vidhya Ramalingam

From birth, the child is on a journey of discovering himself and achieving varying levels of independence. The foundation of Montessori education is to support this child of immense capabilities in his quest of ‘Help me do/think by myself’. In this series, parents share their experiences of witnessing the child’s growing independence.

Taking responsibility for their own learning is one of the most important aspects that a Montessori child achieves. Uma Devi, mother of 9 year Sriyansh, shares how excited she was to see her son take charge of his academic work and do related things independently.

Uma was pleasantly surprised to see Sriyansh being able to take down important points by reading content from relevant books when he was researching on Egyptian civilization. He even took a step forward by collecting textbooks and materials for reference from his older cousins.

There was an instance when Sriyansh carefully planned his work and study in an organised way before the school assessments while his mother was completely tied down by a family emergency and could hardly devote any time for him for more than a month. *“I was happy to see that he could structure and manage his studies all by himself”* states the gratified mother.

“The approach allows the child to focus on their interest by making their own choices. This makes them responsible for their tasks and develops a sense of ownership from an early age, which plays a major role in developing independence”, Uma on how the Montessori approach helped. She further adds that the concepts learnt in much detail and in such a beautiful pace makes for strong fundamentals.

At the homefront, Sriyansh has been exposed to different art forms and a vast collection of books. Uma believes that reading makes the children think, comprehend and organise their thoughts. She is glad that in recent times, her son has started reading unabridged versions of children’s classics like Little Men, Little Women and Anne of Green Gables and is also trying his hand at poetry.



Minds behind Books

An Insight into Indian Authors and Illustrators of Children's Literature

- Roopa Sundar



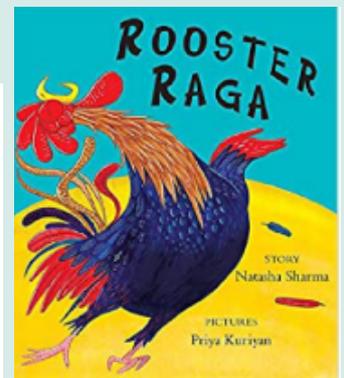
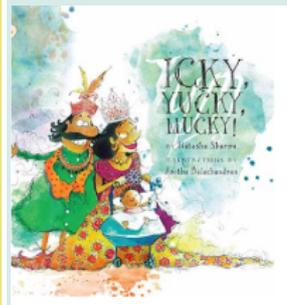
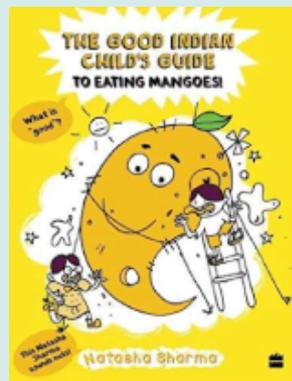
Books play an important role in a child's life allowing them to experience a world of possibilities. In this series we bring to you reflections of people behind children's literature.

Natasha Sharma, an award winning children's book author writes across age groups and in a variety of formats. She enjoys shifting gears between picture books, chapter books, middle grade and historical fiction with a particular love for picture books as it presents a challenge in putting character, plot, layers and hooks at every page turn and all this in barely 500 words. Often wielding humour on the page, her stories are known to lead to many giggles.

"I never talk down to children or try to force a moral down their throat" says Natasha when asked about the things she keeps in mind while writing for children. "The technical aspects of sentence structure and vocabulary level is somewhere at the back of my mind to suit the age group I am writing for. I've found my writing voice to incorporate humour and I love finding the twist, the unexpected and the other perspective."

Natasha Sharma

Drawing inspiration from the world, she speaks of how Icky, Yucky, Mucky was inspired by seeing terrible table manners and her own nibbling of nails in her childhood. *"It's a constant stream of inspiration and the most unlikely of things can trigger an idea for a character, a plot point or a scene."* Her historical fiction series called History Mystery spins tales around historical facts and emperors of India.



To have your share of laughs and interesting tidbits of history, grab a Natasha Sharma Book! You can find out more about her books at www.natashasharma.in and follow her at; Instagram: @WritesNatasha, Twitter: @WritesNatasha, Fb: @NatashaSharmaWrites

What's this Flower!

An Explorer's Guide to Local Flora

-Roopa Sundar



Children are innately curious about the environment around, plants being a big part of it. Unless adults take an interest in this natural world, we will be unable to share this richness and joy with children. To aid in this journey of awareness, we bring to you snippets of information about plants in our very own backyards.



ALLAMANDAS

Purple Allamanda or *Allamanda blanchetii* shot in Adyar Theosophical Society Gardens. Allamandas belong to the Apocynaceae family and the genus name honours Frederich Allamand, an 18th century Swiss botanist.

This climber is an Allamanda with large 10 to 15 cm diameter deep purple flowers. Allamandas come from tropical South America. All plants with milky sap like these are potentially toxic. One can identify this family easily by the trumpet-shaped flowers that have radially symmetrical lobes that are usually twisted like little propeller blades as well as the milky sap.



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****These excerpts are from 'Nature Rambles' by Mohan V Chunkath, a collection of about 200 species of local insects, flowers and birds, proving to be an invaluable resource for budding nature enthusiasts, be it elementary (6-12 years) children or adults who are just beginning their explorations of the natural world. Nature Rambles is available at www.nature-rambles.com.***

Corrections and Clarifications

In the series 'Tree Stories', the opening statement carries a typographical error. It should be "It was indeed a unique school built on sand with thatch roofed circular mud classes and plenty of trees" (March, 2020)

Q & A by AMI Trainers!

It is amazing to watch children transform and grow into young individuals forming their own unique personalities. We often wonder during these developmental years if we, as parents, teachers and caretakers of young children are making the right decisions and providing our children with the adequate support they need. In this segment, we have trained educationalists with tons of experience to answer the series of doubts and questions that arise in our minds and help us through this journey.



Hemalatha Rangarajan, an AMI 3-6 Trainer, Co-Director of Training at Navadisha Montessori Foundation, Chennai. She holds AMI Montessori diplomas at two age levels, 3-6 and 6-12. She worked with children for 10 years in Patasala Montessori School, where she eventually served as Vice Principal. She has been involved in mentoring schools and is committed to widening the scope of Montessori education through research.

Question:

As we continue to interact online with children in the current scenario of lockdown how can we as teachers give the child an experience of a festival?

Answered by Hemalatha Rangarajan:

The current situation is unusual. To prepare a child for a festival at home is not the role of a teacher. Perhaps you could discuss the need to prepare the children for a simple festival experience at home. Even in this situation the adults in a home can prepare the children for all the festivals. The preparation can be in the form of story or a song around the festival. The parents must make sure that the child is included in the festival celebration by offering the child some real responsibility – to clean the altar, to string the flowers or decorations, to prepare the sweet. Listen to the parents as they share with you how they involved the children instead of rushing to give them suggestions

*The Indian Montessori Foundation (IMF) organised a series of webinars by AMI Trainers to help adults deal with the unique situation of supporting children in the home environment during the absence of school. Become a donor to access Hemalatha's article 'Optimising the Child's Experiences' with other interesting questions raised during her webinar. Visit the donor section in our website <https://montessori-india.org/>

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Do send in articles or news to thetouchboard@gmail.com

New opportunity to reach the Montessori community!

The Montessori community is growing! Parents are more aware of Montessori education than ever before.

The Indian Montessori Foundation (IMF) publishes The Touch Board (newsletter, 7 issues: August, September, October, November, January, February, March) and Montessori Matters (Annual Journal).

Communication to target the Montessori community can be published as per the following tariff.

The Touch Board (colour; 6 x 8 cms)

1 issue	₹ 500
4 issues	₹1500
7 issues	₹2800

Montessori Matters (black and white; [full page] 20 x 12cms)

1 issue	₹1000
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The advertisements can be sent to thetouchboard@gmail.com to reach us on or before the 5th of the previous month.

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AMI MEMBERSHIP

Membership to Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) is open to everyone! Become a part of a worldwide community dedicated to the recognition of the unique nature of childhood, natural human development and the rights of the child. Discounted rates to events, AMI eBulletins and Journals are some of the benefits a member receives. AMI membership is an individual membership and is not available to schools, universities, and other educational organisations.

Membership fees begin at 40 euros.

To join, please visit www.montessori-ami.org