# THE TOUCH BOARD

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## *Documentaries on Montessori Education and Training*

AMI and BBC StoryWorks have brought out two beautiful short documentaries, one showing Montessori Education in action and one focusing on AMI teacher training. The locations for the films, Montessori Centre of Minnesota and The Cornerstone Montessori School and Siembra Montessori School are a wonderful example of how Montessori education in the US has served its local community for many years.

The films are aimed to be presented to parents and educators who are not currently within the Montessori community, but who would benefit from learning more about the education and its opportunities.

*The films can be viewed on the following specially created AMI web pages:*

https://montessori-ami.org/montessori-education

https://montessori-ami.org/montessori-teacher

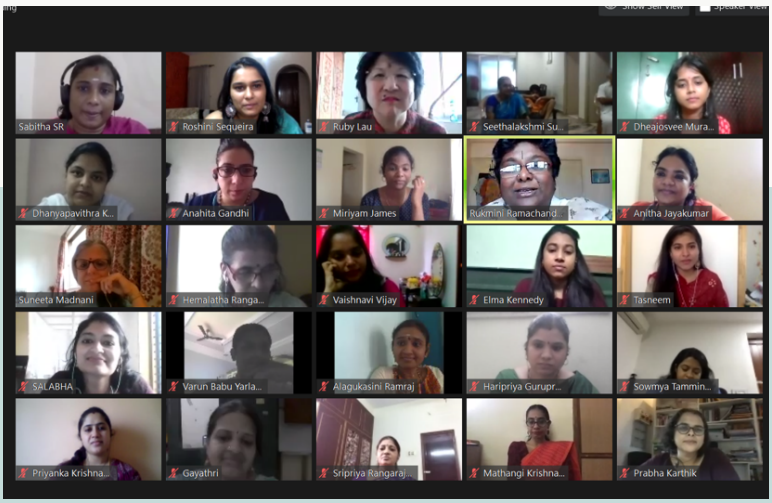
# AMI Primary Course Graduation- Hyderabad & Chennai

*- Vidhya Ramalingam & Aditi Ganesh*

Challenges build new channels to overcome the hurdles that come our way to grow for the future. In this wise, the Montessori Training and Research Trust (MTRT), Hyderabad and the Navadisha Montessori Foundation (NMF), Chennai have facilitated their students to complete their AMI Primary Diploma by successfully conducting online examinations and thereafter celebrating the special graduation ceremony on a virtual platform during the last week of July.

The students thanked the training team and those people instrumental in pursuing their dream through songs and videos that portrayed their journey of transformation.

Moment of Gratitude – *"During testing times, drawing from each other's strength and love have kept us together towards successful completion of the course"*
Teenaz Reporter, Director of Training, MTRT



Trainers and Examiners - Rukmini Ramachandran, Ruby Lau, Hemalatha Rangarajan, Suneeta Madnani and Teenaz Reporter came together with the students and their families to celebrate the graduation of the 16th NMF batch.

> *"The course has scaffolded and moulded my thinking. It has taught me to trust in nature's power, breaking many myths I had about child development and has provided me a new perspective of how a young mind can be educated."*
>
> *Shazia Dayani, Hyderabad*

# Workshop - Bangalore

*- Kavneet Chadha*

Montessori Institute of Bangalore (MIB) conducted a Child Safety and First Aid workshop from July 22 to 24, 2020. The aim of the workshop was to safely sanctify the immediate environment and provide basic first aid before medical aid arrives. The speaker, Dr. Chetan Ginigeri from Aster Hospital spoke about scenarios of injuries, how to assess and respond to them, required first aid measures and present day challenges.

*"We shouldn't be afraid to administer CPR as any CPR is better than no CPR"*
Chetan Ginigeri

*"We missed the hands on experience with respect to CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation) but the videos and supportive material helped with the understanding and responsiveness in any given situation,"* says Josephine Ramya, who works with toddlers. Some of the questions raised were about age old practices versus present day treatment of injuries as well as treatment of injuries in a classroom and home.

*"Many injuries are preventable. As a community, we need to help implement safety measures and follow them diligently. To have awareness and to create a safe environment for children is not a choice but indeed a responsibility of the adults."*
– Loga Balasubramanian, Primary Directress

## *Apps for Knowledge Seekers*

*- Vidhya Ramalingam*

*Knowledge is just a click away with judicious use of an ever growing number of mobile and web apps. This segment is an initiative to help teachers and parents identify resourceful apps that help access information about one's immediate environment to share with children.*

### PLANT IDENTIFICATION

Children going on nature walks are a usual sight in any Montessori environment and there are always new plants to discover in each of these explorations. To know the names of these unknown plants and their key features, there are many apps that can be handy for teachers and parents. PlantNet, PlantSnap and LeafSnap, are apps that will help identify thousands of plant species from flowering plants to cacti. Seek by iNaturalist is an app that takes it one step further and helps to identify not only flora but also local fauna. All you have to do is to take a clear picture!

The apps help in identification and give a list of similar plants to compare and find the plant of our observation accurately. They give key information like family name, genus, species, common names, uses and also links to search for additional information. They supply a wide range of pictures of the different parts of the same plant within its database namely fruits, flowers, stem, leaves and the whole plant.

All these apps support uploading pictures from the gallery which helps to take pictures offline and then find information about the plant once we get online. Download any of these apps to help children enjoy identifying the plants in their surroundings.

Follow these links to download the apps:

**PlantNet**
https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.plantnet

**LeafSnap**
https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=plant.identification.snap

**PlantSnap**
https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.fws.plantsnap

**Seek**
https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.inaturalist.seek

# *Life and Learning with Children*

Prabha Karthik is an AMI Elementary Trainer-in-Training and mother of two. She serves on the training team of the Elementary course at Navadisha Montessori Foundation (NMF) and is currently part of an experts committee to adapt an Ethics Education resource manual for 6 to 12 year olds. She shares her thoughts on the question 'How do you sustain a child's interest in something'.

One of my trainers shared a story during a meeting. The topic being discussed was 'How do we help children complete their work'. And one of the other trainers very promptly and confidently said to them, *"My children always complete their work"*. When the rest of the trainers looked at her in incredulity, she said, *"I show them how to write 'The End'"*. Understanding this relieves us a great deal both as a parent or a teacher with six to twelve year olds. As I thought about this many instances came to my mind, mostly in my role as a parent.

I remember asking my daughter's teacher at the time, about why my daughter had suddenly lost interest in puzzles when she had been extremely interested in them for over one and a half years. When my daughter was about 3 years old, she would spend over an hour putting together puzzle after puzzle. And suddenly she stopped. And I still remember the teacher's words. She said *"That was a phase"*. And she might get interested in something else. And she did – she would bring home stones and pebbles from everywhere. I just could not understand why. Her bag would be so heavy and crusty with sand and mud, it would drive me wild. And it became so much that I felt compelled to return many of them to her school! And one day, she stopped. These interests come and go. And the fact that a child is no longer interested in something is not necessarily a bad thing, it is not something to worry about. Something else will catch their attention next.

More recently being locked down in the peak of summer has led to many discussions with my now (almost) 7 year old son about the weather. So we began to check the weather page on the newspaper for Chennai's maximum temperature. After checking the temperature for a few days, I got super interested in it and said *"Why not record it in this tiny little notepad?"*. So we put the date and wrote Chennai's maximum temperature. He got interested in that and would run to get the book to record. Then I got even more interested in it and said *"Let's record the top ten hottest cities in India"*.

Now in hindsight, I can see that that was the point where it all began to go downhill. One day I heard myself say, *"You haven't recorded today, you cannot do anything else until you finish that"*. It had become a chore. He was still interested in the temperature, checking what all the hottest cities were and we would have excited discussions about how Allahabad is not even in the top ten today after being the hottest for so many days running, but recording it every day was not something he wanted to do. So I said, *"With tomorrow, it will be the end of two weeks of recording the temperature and we can stop it then and see how it has been for the last two weeks"*.

So we did that. We created a closure for that activity. But he still continues to check the weather every day, he knows where to find it, how to open and fold the newspaper (which itself is I think an amazing skill) to the right place and knows the names and spellings of about a dozen cities in India, was interested enough to find them on the map and knows where they are now. Those are great outcomes I think.

As an adult who takes their job of inspiring children to work and learn and discover very seriously, we are in great danger of leaping onto every bit of interest they show us and taking off on a journey ourselves leaving the child far behind, or even worse, dragging them along half-heartedly. We tend to immediately picture an end product in our mind. I know I thought about how we could draw graphs of the hottest cities for the month of May, maybe I could show him how to enter it in an excel sheet. But that is not what the child is thinking about at all. And if we do not rein in our enthusiasm, we hijack their project and idea or learning.

For the children especially of this age, there need not always be an end product to all that they do. It is the process that matters. That interest, the excitement, that initial question they come up with is the key. And then we can ask the children, *"What exactly do you wonder about it? What do you want to know?"* With these articulate 6 to 12 year olds, they are very capable of telling us what exactly they want to know. And we can tell them or help them find out just that much and no more.

Ask yourself some questions out loud about what your little one is interested in. A little rhetorical (timely placed) question like, *"Gosh, it is so hot, I wonder what the temperature is today,"* makes my son rush off to find the newspaper. And I pretend to be completely surprised when he comes back to me with the information.

These children are so excited and interested and enthusiastic about everything around us. It is neither possible nor necessary for them to commit to one topic or idea and keep being interested in it over a long time. The one thing that can dampen their enthusiasm is if we try to control it or use it to control them or if we become more interested in it than them. At the same time, backing off does not mean abandoning them and taking no interest in their curiosity. These children are collaborators. Many of them will be interested for longer in a topic only if there is someone they can share their findings with, who is also interested in listening to them. Even *"Oh really!" "That's so cool!" "How did you find that out?" "I wonder if..."* is enough to keep them rattling on.

We must tend to the fire of their enthusiasm carefully, adding juicy little bits when necessary that will keep the fire burning. And if the interest in one topic dies down, we must trust and have faith that in a supportive environment, something else will take its place.

Let's sow all the seeds we can and not worry about which of them take root.

> *The environment must be rich in motives which lend interest to activity and invite the child to conduct his own experiences.*
>
> *Dr. Maria Montessori*

# *Mindful Practices*

*- City Reporters & Archana Narayanan*

*In our world today, there is an urgent need for practices stemming out of awareness and love. Through this segment we hope to build a bank of ideas towards sustainability that have been adopted and shared by schools and teachers.*

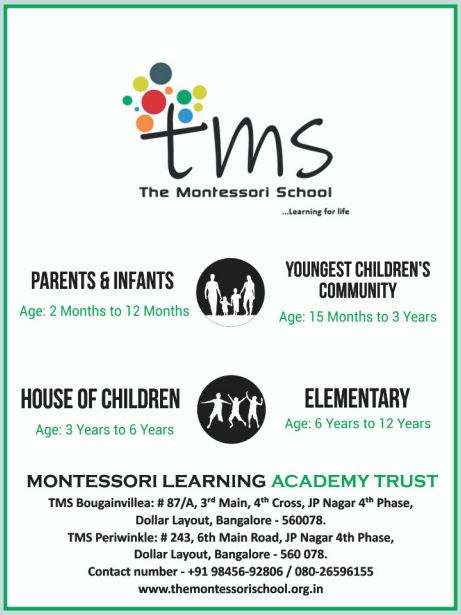
Paper is an invaluable resource that ought to be used with a lot of discretion. These are some ways in which schools are trying to reduce their paper use:

- Moving into paperless communication with parents, including sending e-reports
- Reusing paper bits for art work like collage decorations during festivals
- Involving elementary children in making paper mache bowls and holders and textured paper

  (https://www.instructables.com/id/How-to-Make-and-Recycle-Paper/)
- Ensuring printing is always double sided and single-side papers are reused
- Having a weekly class audit, tracking paper usage and sticking to paper reduction and efficient use goals that are come up along with children. The paper wasted can actually be weighed, bringing those weight and volume lessons to practice and making it an interesting math calculation
- Replacing paper towels with cloth towels
- Having a collection box for used paper and handing them over periodically to a local paper recycler

Are there more ways to conserve and reuse paper? Share your thoughts with us at thetouchboard@gmail.com

*We thank Prakruthi Montessori House of Children, Redwood Montessori School, Sparkles Kinder Kastle, Mindstein Montessori, Krtsa Montessori and Anthea Montessori House of Children for their input.



# *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...*

## Owning it by doing it

The more we do a certain task the better we get at it. With practice, the task, sort of becomes a part of us. This is true even for the mundane tasks that we do at home everyday. The drawing of the kolam every morning, the sequence involved in it, were shown to us and we had to remember it when we started doing it initially. But, after a few years, we didn't need to think about it. The sequence came naturally - the sweeping, the washing of the floor and then drawing the kolam on the wet floor - we do it without thinking about it. It has become so much part of our routine that we no longer think of it as our contribution for the family. We had begun to own it, we became independent with it.

Similarly, this child, from birth to six years, has mastered many of her movements, owns most of the language in her home and is quite independent and capable in many ways. How do we take this independence they have acquired further? How can we help our children own the task that they choose to do? What does independence with responsibility look like for this child?

**Different needs, different support**

The needs of the children from six years are different and so the support we offer must also be different. It is not just about doing it for oneself. It is also about contributing for others. They want to be a contributing member of home and then the society. Supporting them in taking up responsibilities at home, is a big step towards this ownership and empowerment.

**The next step**

Taking them forward with what they are already capable of and extending it further will help them take that ownership. If they were peeling vegetables when they were young, guiding them in cooking those vegetables would be appropriate. If they have been bringing the milk packets from the doorstep to the refrigerator, showing them how to make coffee or tea with milk for someone at home would be appropriate. However, even if it is the next level in a familiar task, they need guidance. They need to be shown and talked about the process involved, for a few times before they get started. The logical and reasoning mind they have can be trusted to take care of the rest.

### Expectation

Setting an expectation for the task they are involved in will help us and the child be clear about the task. “When you are sweeping the floor, please sweep behind the sofas. It looks a bit left out. I can show you how to do it if you like”, such expectations give clear guidance for them to focus on. It is important we guide them by doing it with them and then taking a step back slowly after a few times will help them own the task. Preparation for the task, talking to them about it and gathering the resources with them, is an important aspect of doing it too. It helps them in accomplishing what they set out to do.

### Choice and collaboration

Offering choice leads to commitment and it further leads to ownership towards the responsibility. The more committed they are, the more positive their attitude becomes. “In our home the floor needs cleaning every day, would you be interested in sweeping it or mopping it”, “Would you rather help in sorting the laundry for wash or fold them after they are all washed?“ This way they have limited choice to start with and they are more likely to take it up. They love to work in collaboration with us, “I am going to clean the house today, would you like to wipe down the doors and windows or dust the shelves”. By offering such choices, they feel included in our lives and will be more willing to help. They begin to understand that their contribution has an impact in the overall harmony of the household. They have a logical mind to reason with, so helping them understand why we are doing it a certain way will help them understand the task and expectation better. To continue to support independence at different stages of development, we could be asking ourselves, “Is there a choice for her? Is it too challenging? How can I break it down so she can be more independent?” Responsibilities at home help our children become contributing members of our home. It doesn’t just provide them with the skills of owning it and doing it, it builds a sense of independence and confidence they might need to handle any situation. world. However, supporting these in an optimum way is as essential too.

## *Nurturing Independence - A Parent's Experience*

*- Aditi Ganesh*

*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.*

Since the time 3 year old Kabir joined a Montessori school, Manasvi Chordia, his mother has had several revelations. The most recent one has been how he understood the importance of staying at home during this pandemic and did not ask to step out or meet people. In fact, if the adults had to step out to buy essentials, he insisted on checking that masks, gloves and sanitizer were carried before they left the house. He also voluntarily helped out with household chores and in the kitchen peeling potatoes, washing rice, mashing, spreading butter on bread and so on.

Manasvi feels opportunities that are given to the child in school and can also be replicated in a similar working environment at home. Sometimes the challenge is making all the adults who interact with the child on an everyday basis be aware that it is essential to maintain similar levels of patience in supporting the child in believing in himself and his capabilities.

Manasvi vouches for the system and says that it has been an eye-opener in many ways because it focuses on treating the children as individuals who are capable without constantly nagging or repressing the child. *“Montessori has helped to nurture his creativity, interests and relentless curiosity.”*

# *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.*

Niloufer Wadia worked in advertising for over two decades before returning to her first love, art and illustration. Known for her artistic representations of women in all their colour, emotions and ethereal beauty, she also began illustrating for children's books with many publications like Tulika, Pratham, Karadi Tales and more. Illustrations are vital in children's books, bringing in excitement, curiosity, inspiration, awe, setting the stage for the story and giving clues as to what is to follow. Niloufer uses simple ideas and forms while illustrating and also adds in fun details that children can discover slowly.

While in Kanna Panna, the story of a young boy who doesn't speak is brought to life through her visuals, in Sadiq wants to Stitch, her watercolor vistas animate the story of a boy who wants to stitch against the norms of his community. Be it Adil Ali's shoes, the Adventures of the humongoose Family or about Saving the Dalai Lama's Cranes, Niloufer never fails to bring beauty to the magic of words.

*"The internet is the ultimate inspiration. I can't scroll without discovering a new artist, a new style, a new way of drawing or looking at something. All of which I want to replicate immediately, but obviously can't. So I suppose it lodges somewhere in my brain and hopefully enhances every future scribble."*

Niloufer Wadia

**All of Niloufer Wadia's illustrated books, suitable for children above five, are available on www.amazon.in.**

# *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.*

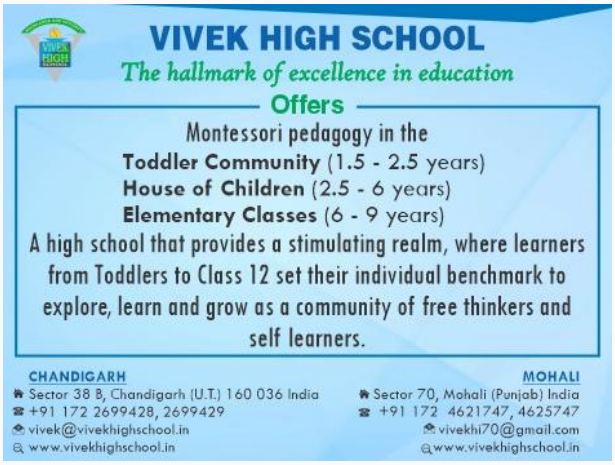
**COMMON WHITE FRANGIPANI**

Another popular garden shrub or small tree which can be spotted in Chennai gardens is the Common White Frangipani, Plumeria rubra var. acutifolia. The genus Plumeria is a small genus native to warm tropical areas of the Pacific Islands, Caribbean, South America and Mexico. It belongs to the oleander family, Apocynaceae. In tropical regions, Plumeria may reach a height of 9 to 12 metres. Their widely spaced thick succulent branches are round or pointed, and have long leathery, fleshy leaves in clusters near the branch tips.

Plumeria rubra var. acutifolia has very fragrant white flowers with yellow centers. The petals are small and strongly overlapping, giving the impression of a flower in the process of unfolding. Plumeria flowers are most fragrant at night in order to lure sphingid hawkmoths to pollinate them. The flowers have no nectar, and simply dupe their pollinators. The moths inadvertently pollinate them by transferring pollen from flower to flower in their fruitless search for nectar.

The common name, Frangipani comes from an Italian noble family. A 16th century marquess of the family is said to have invented a plumeria-scented perfume.

***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.**



# 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.*

Neelima Mhaskar, Co-Director of the AMI 3- 6 Diploma course in Chandigarh, gained her AMI Montessori Diploma in 1989 under Zarin Malva at RTI in Mumbai. She started the Montessori Environment at Sapling Nursery in Pune and has over 19 years of work experience with children. Neelima currently works on AMI courses in Shenzhen and Chongqing in China.

## Question:

*When will the child learn to sleep independently? Is that a milestone or how do we train?*

## Answered by Neelima Mhaskar:

*Having a routine from very early on, the child's body rhythm also gets into a routine. This shall ensure that the sleep routine also falls in place. Sleeping area can promote independence right from birth. The bed must be in a way that the child can get on and off on his own when they need to use the toilet, drink water and it also gives a message that he can go to bed when he is sleepy or tired. This further aids independence. Independence can further be supported by involving the child in making the bed each morning. This can begin as a collaborative effort and the child can proceed to doing it himself. This does a lot to their self-esteem and confidence.*

*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 |

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

## Donate generously to IMF!

Your donation will help us keep our work of reaching Montessori ideas to children and families alive.

### Friend of IMF -Silver Card

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For more information, Contact : 8248010258 or email us at info@montessori-india.org

## 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**