

THE TOUCH BOARD

indian
montessori
foundation



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IMF Online Conference

On the occasion of Maria Montessori's 150th birth anniversary, the Indian Montessori Foundation (IMF) and The Montessori Lab, Greece presented an Online Conference, 'The Relevance of Montessori Today' on August 31, 2020. The conference brought together trainers, teachers, parents and students from across the world.

About 500 participants were welcomed by Lynne Lawrence, AMI Executive Director, who spoke about how Montessori approach values kindness and responds to the developmental needs of children in preparation to coexist in harmony with society.

AMI Trainers from India and Greece spoke of how Montessori's work is of utmost importance in our current times. While Teenaz Reporter laid the importance of trudging on the difficult task of peace that lay in front of each of us and on doing every bit that one can, Irene Fafalios spoke of the significance of building healthy human relationships and Rukmini Ramachandran highlighted the idea of a child in harmony and how parents and teachers must come together to help children in disharmony.

What resonated with Makkapati Vasudha, a teacher from Hyderabad is that to affect the lives of our children for the better, action is needed from us. And this action cannot be alone but together, not in isolation but as a society, not rooted in selfishness but selflessness.



From left to right :

AMI Primary Trainers Teenaz Reporter, Rukmini Ramachandran, Irene Fafalios, Ruby Lau and AMI Executive Director, Lynne Lawrence



“The conference drove home the point that no matter how small the contribution may appear it does play a huge role in impacting the child’s ability to succeed in society and world peace begins with adult-child relationships.”

- Rita Sanghvi, Mumbai; Shalini Thilak, Bangalore

“The conference generated a lot of ideas about how to continue to grow as Montessorians. Only when children receive love, care, justice and acceptance, their needs are met and the innate goodness is brought forth thus transforming the world into a better place”, adds Ayesha Basheer. The session ended with video clips of teachers from different schools, sharing inspiring words about their work with children and a blend of renditions of legendary musicians.

AMI Primary Diploma Course Inauguration - Hyderabad , Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai

- City Reporters



While the students were excited and eager to begin this life changing journey, the training teams were setting off with a conscious endeavor to offer the students the best opportunity to learn and grow in such challenging times.

AMI Primary Diploma Courses have commenced in different cities in a blended manner beginning with online sessions that will later be followed by on-site training. Around 90 students, from all walks of life have signed up across the country to gain an insight into Montessori’s vision and education as an aid to life. All the training institutes - Montessori Training and Research Trust (MTRT), Hyderabad, Ratan Tata Institute (RTI), Mumbai, Montessori Institute of Bangalore (MIB) and Navadisha Montessori Foundation (NMF), Chennai geared up and received their students on an online platform, beginning the end of August.

Bhairavi Saturdekar, a mother of a 3 year old from Mumbai discovered the Montessori concept during her search for a play school. *“The quote that struck a chord with me was ‘Don’t look at me, look at the way I’m pointing’. Montessori’s emphasis on observing the child to find out all the answers we want is very interesting. Looking forward to learning more through this program.”*

Apps for Knowledge Seekers

- Vidhya Ramalingam

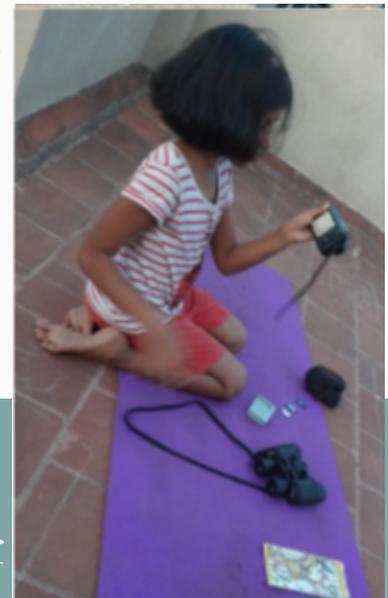


Knowledge is just a click away with judicious use of an ever growing number of mobile and web apps. This segment is an initiative to help teachers and parents identify resourceful apps that help access information about one's immediate environment to share with children.

BIRD IDENTIFICATION

We see a variety of birds in our everyday life and it is a treat to observe them. Bird watching with children can be a delight which can help them pay close attention to nature and appreciate the beauty. To identify the birds and to share more details about them with the children, we can equip ourselves with the Merlin Bird ID app by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The app has more than 6,000 bird species and over 50 bird packs in its database to identify birds across the globe. At first, we need to install a bird pack depending on the region that we would be doing the observation. Once installed, there are two ways that we can identify the birds. We can do this either by answering five simple questions about a bird we are trying to identify (Start Bird ID) or by taking a clear picture of the bird (Photo ID) and the

app will come up with a list of possible matches. The Photo ID option can be used offline so we can identify birds from photos we take when we are far from internet services. There is another option labelled 'Explore Birds', that helps to get information about any bird in particular that we are looking for apart from identification. We can also listen to beautiful bird songs and calls that we identify. Moreover, we can turn on the customized location and date tools to generate best answers for our neighbourhood or wherever we are for any time of year. Bird watching can be a great nature activity for children and it is never too late to begin from our own backyard or balcony.



Follow the below link to download the app:

Merlin Bird ID by Cornell Lab
<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.labs.merlinbirdid.app>



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Workshop - Chennai, Bangalore

- Aditi Ganesh & Kavneet Chadha

Kinds of Writing



Helping Children to be Writers

Navadisha Montessori Foundation (NMF) conducted an online workshop on 'Helping Children to be Writers' between August 10 and 21, 2020. Rukmini Ramachandran, Prabha Karthik and Akhila Ramnarayan highlighted the different aspects of writing including content, spelling, handwriting, punctuations, paragraphs, presentation of work and the adult's role in offering this tool of self-expression to children.

"I was moved by the idea of 'Stoking the imagination' by bringing different genres of creative writing and art forms into the classroom. Unless the children have this background knowledge and experience, they cannot be good writers. Having worked with the 3 to 6 age group for many years, it was fascinating to see how the child is taken from here into the Elementary environment."

- Anjana Kushalappa

'Discover Storytelling' organised by the Montessori Institute of Bangalore (MIB) on August 19, 2020, brought to focus the technique of storytelling. Geeta Ramanujam, the founder of Kathalaya Academy of Storytelling discussed the key elements of a story, styles of telling, voice modulation, music, props, effective communication skills, experiential storytelling and how to create a balance between all. The sessions were made interactive, encouraging the attendees to use their imagination to create and narrate their own stories.



Geeta Ramanujam
Founder, Kathalaya Academy of Storytelling

Rajni Talreja speaks of how Geeta Ramanujam's infectious energy spread across and how the workshop helped her understand that the words of a story can be made more effective through various means including the enthusiasm of the storyteller. *"The workshop made me realise the impact stories create on the lives of children and how we as educators, parents and family members can create a positive impact through stories,"* adds Harshneer Chandra.

AMI Elementary Orientation Course – Hyderabad

- Vidhya Ramalingam



"What this course has made me mindful of is that physical independence is only the first step, 'the tip of the iceberg' and a much bigger task awaits us of mental independence."

- Elma Sheldon

With 39 participants on roll from different places and cultures, Asia's first online AMI Elementary Orientation course under the auspices of Montessori Training and Research Trust (MTRT) was conducted by Madhavi Gaddam, AMI Elementary Auxiliary Trainer. The course began on August 11, 2020 and took place over nearly three weeks.

The course has brought a ray of new light, new wisdom and new insight, says Farhat Aziz, a student on the course. She further adds, *"I always struggled to understand when to let the child work on his own and when to intervene, but now I have understood that an adult should intervene before the frustration kicks in. This line made me think and put the entire concept of enabling the child to be an independent worker."*

What's in the IMF Store ?

In the quest to bring Montessori philosophy and principles to families and communities and supporting schools and training centres in their work, the Indian Montessori Foundation (IMF) has on sale Montessori books, didactic language material and furniture that aids independence in young children.



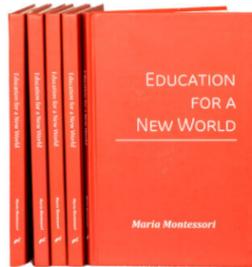
Montessori Books

Montessori books are an invaluable resource for students of Montessori practice and parents who wish to understand the developmental needs of the child to better support them. All the books are easy on the eyes with their large font and carry extensive and useful footnotes for the readers. The publications under the IMF banner are listed below :

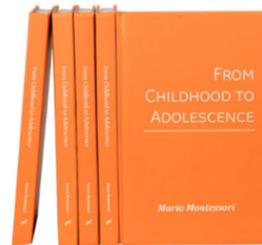
All these publications and materials can be purchased on the website montessori-india.org or at events organised by the IMF in your city !



The Child in the Family
₹370.00



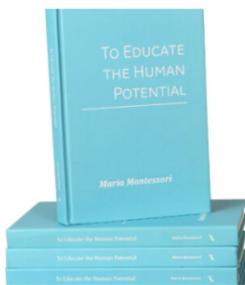
Education for a New World
₹360.00



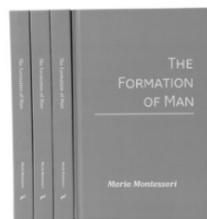
From Childhood to Adolescence
₹430.00



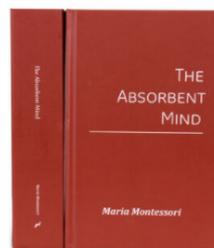
What you should know about your child
₹490.00



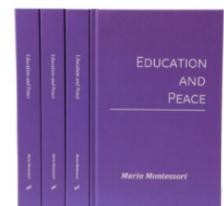
To Educate the Human Potential
₹390.00



The Formation of Man
₹430.00



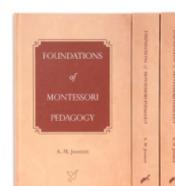
The Absorbent Mind
₹1,060.00



Education and Peace
₹560.00



Age of Miracles
₹790.00



Foundations of Montessori Pedagogy
₹750.00

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.



It is a common sight to see different kinds of pouring sets in a primary Montessori environment ranging from pouring grains to water and with variations in the sizes of the grains that offer added challenges. Many times the grains are used for a while after which they are disposed of. Some schools have found creative ways of reusing it:

- Drying grains out in the sun and prolonging their use
- If fit enough using for roasting or cooking
- Experiments with older children
- Art work
- Germination activities
- Moving it to a bird feeder in the outdoors
- Rangoli, having ground the grains to flour!

Are there more ways to conserve and reuse grains? 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.

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“This inner drama of the baby’s life is a drama of love. Love in the widest sense is the sole great reality, which evolves in the hidden recesses of the soul and from time to time fills it wholly. These marvelous activities do not pass away without leaving indelible traces, by which the man will be the greater, and which give him the higher characteristics that will accompany him all his life; take place in humble silence.”

(Montessori Maria, The Secret of Childhood Sangam Books, U.K. 2003, Ch 3, P 38-39)



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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...

Unravelling Stories

“Tell me a fact and I’ll learn, tell me the truth and I’ll believe. But tell me a story and it will live in my heart forever” - Ancient Proverb

The other day I attended a Webinar, and the speaker was talking about a very serious topic indeed. In the middle of her speech, she said, ‘I am going to tell you all a story’. Instantaneously, it brought smiles in most people who had thus far been listening with frowned eyebrows. When the story was being told, a lot of smiling nodding heads were seen in the little rectangles on my screen. There were many more messages written in the chat box about the relevance of the story to the topic. As for me, the story stayed in my mind long after the webinar ended.

Let us pause for a moment and think about what stories do for us. Stories take us to a different world; to a realm where only ourselves and the characters exist, it stimulates our imagination, it brings out emotions, it invokes memories, it helps us think logically, it expands our vocabulary, it allows empathy in us. There is research based evidence for all this.

If a story can do all this to us as adults, imagine what it could do for our elementary child who is brimming with life and energy and wanting to be a member of her society. Well, it does all this and much more at an exponential rate. In fact, there could be no better way to reach an elementary child, than through a story.

It is no wonder then that every culture in the world has its own story to tell. Stories have been part of oral traditions around the world. Thousands of stories were told and passed on through generations before it was written down. We know this because we are still here and we are carrying in our minds some of the stories we heard as children.

Reading a story or listening to one, gives a little peek into someone else’s world. That’s what makes a story more appealing. It is one of the ways through which children understand their world around them. It directly links to the need for the child to communicate, to be gregarious.

What is in a story?

Every story has a beginning - where the characters and plot is introduced; the plot itself and an ending - where all problems are solved and a conclusion to the plot is arrived at. The level of drama in the story depends on the writer or the storyteller. This pattern which exists universally in all stories appeals directly to the logical reasoning mind of the elementary child. It appeals to their intellect.

The more stories they read or are being read to, the more their ability to analyse and problem solve. Stories offer solutions from a different person’s perspective without being preachy or pedantic. It actually aids moral development.

We might also find that by reading more stories for them, they become story writers themselves. Whether they write their own stories or not, it creates a love for language and an expansive vocabulary which is the most direct impact of reading to our children.

What kind of stories?

With the power to imagine, the child at 6 is ready for any story. Unlike the younger child, who needed stories based on real life situations, the elementary children are ready for any kind of story under the sun or about the sun and everything that existed with the sun. Their quest for knowledge creates a keen interest in everything around them and so stories are one of the perfect ways to introduce ideas, concepts and how things came to be. Mythological stories, stories of the yore, science fiction, comics, mystery, adventure, the genre doesn't matter anymore. It only matters that their thirsting mind is not story starved. It is also important that they are given a choice in what stories they want to be read to. Limited choice would be more useful. "Would you like me to read Enid Blyton or Roald Dahl stories for you?" But in order to make a choice they need preparation. If they don't know what they are signing up for, the more likely that they might not see through it. It will be a good idea to have a conversation around the book and choose collaboratively in such a case.

Where to begin?

For a parent, a safe place to start, if they have not told or read a story so far, would be the conversations they can have with their children. The incidents from our childhood or even little conversations about our childhood can transform into stories. By sharing our life experience, we are allowing our children to create memories of our past through their imagination. It will also be a good idea to have a peek in the nearby library or an online library. Many libraries now have online subscriptions and are easily accessible. It also helps if we as adults can evidently show a bit of interest in books and stories. The curiosity within the elementary child will arouse an interest in what we are interested in - books and stories. As they get older, they become fluent readers and might not look like they want to be read to. However, there is no age where we can stop reading for them. It creates a strong bond, strikes a conversation and inculcates shared interests in the family. Thereby creating harmony in the family and in turn the society.

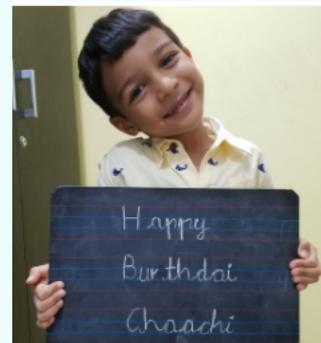
Nurturing Independence - A Parent's Experience

- Meera Ghelani

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.

The indirect preparation, of both the mind and the body is one of the pillars of Montessori education. All the work that the child does with day to day life activities, along with offering rich oral language and phonetic representation, leads the child to a spontaneous explosion of writing and reading.

Akshay Baheti witnessed this when his 4.5 year old son began writing on his own inspired to make a card for his mother's birthday and to also wish his aunt. "The manner of teaching letters as sounds has really been a revelation". Using sounds allows the child to express himself without any limitations after which he is taken on a path of awareness of different ways to spell.



"Be it eating or wearing his clothes or shoes or even brushing and having a bath, Ahaan enjoys doing things independently. This has become a boon in the covid era, as both of us, being doctors are sometimes busy and he ends up helping us a lot by simply taking care of himself", says Akshay, attributing Ahaan's independence to his Montessori education. While both parents support and nurture his emerging independence at home, they do face challenges sometimes like him insisting on doing few things that might be difficult and lead him to give up. They then have to step in and offer help and collaboratively get it to completion, respecting his choice and also following through, and figuring ways to do it along the way. "But that's the fun of parenting!"

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.



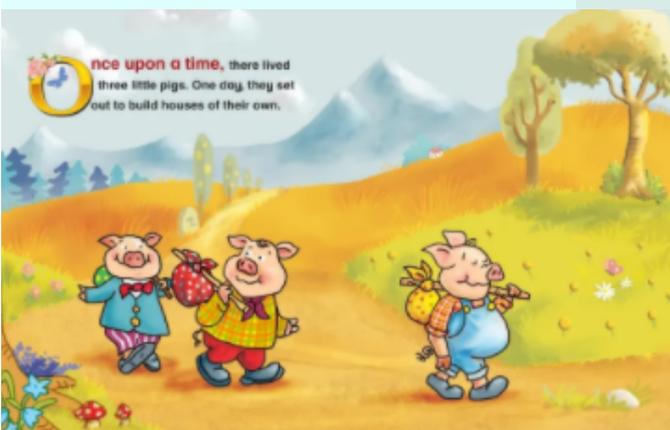
Ashok Rajagopalan, who began his journey in illustrating children's books with Eecha Poocha more than two decades before, more recently plunged into the world of writing with the most famous elephant series Gajapati Kulapati. Though it was originally written for a storytelling session, and hence with all the loud and exaggerated noises, it extended into a series when the first book was received with great love and laughter from young children.

Finding joy in writing funny stories and illustrating comics, cartoons, picture books, and more, Ashok has to his credit more than five hundred children's literature. His illustrations speak to young readers who may not yet have mastered the written word, but are drawn in by the images he creates.

As he continues to illustrate for others, he has authored books across age groups and one of his recent additions is a chapter book Ha..Ha...Hasya about the humorous chaos that reigns between devas and asuras, portraying both sides as a mixture of good, bad and funny. His interest in mythology is also reflected in his abridged versions of Greek epics Iliad and The Odyssey for children.

“My childhood was spent in reams of paper: reading, writing, drawing, cutting, pasting, collecting ... Drawing was what I was known for. There were always books and readers around me; there was no television then. There weren't enough books; I read everything I could lay my hands on. One entertained oneself by creating entertainment. One could not help being creative.”

Ashok Rajagopalan in an interview with EliPuli



What's this Flower!

An Explorer's Guide to Local Flora

-Roopa Sundar

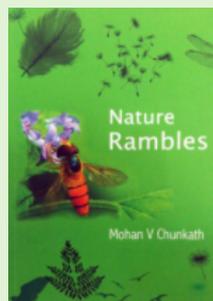


Children are innately curious about the environment around, plants being a big part of it. Unless adults take an interest in this natural world, we will be unable to share this richness and joy with children. To aid in this journey of awareness, we bring to you snippets of information about plants in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

OLEANDER



Another popular member of the Apocynaceae family found in many Besant Nagar gardens is the Oleander, Nerium oleander. The plant is a native of India and the Mediterranean region and is now grown extensively in tropical and subtropical gardens for its beautiful fragrant blossoms. It grows to a height of 3 metres with short branches and dark dusty green leathery narrow leaves, which grow in whorls. The leaves are narrow, lanceolate, 5 to 20 cm long, and with an entire margin. The flowers grow in clusters at the end of each branch; they are white, pink or yellow, 2.5 to 5.0 cm in diameter with 5 petals fringed at the base. They are often, but not always, sweetly scented. The fruit is a long narrow capsule, which splits open at maturity to release numerous downy seeds. The plants are almost free from pests and diseases and left untouched by cattle and goats, due to their toxicity. However, some specialized feeders, like the caterpillars of the beautiful sphingid moth, the Oleander Hawkmoth (*Daphnis nerii*) feed on the leaves of Oleander. They even use the toxic substances to their advantage as the presence of these cardiac glycosides confer on the caterpillars protection from vertebrate predators.



*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.



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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.



Ruby Lau is an AMI 3-6 Trainer and Consultant. Ruby holds AMI Diplomas at the 0-3, 3-6 and 6-12 age levels. She opened her own school in 1990 which she ran for 15 years whilst continuing to work on the training courses in London. Ruby brings her multi-layered experience to mentor training staff and students of AMI training institutes and teachers and schools in many parts of South Asia. Ruby served for 8 years as a member of the Scientific Pedagogy Group at AMI.

Question:

How do we involve a 3-year-old in household chores? Chores are not very interesting even to adults! How should we prepare a child friendly environment?

Answered by Ruby Lau :

Children need to have a space prepared for them for which they are responsible. Order is not just routine, it also includes the way our environment is organised. Things we need must be arranged low so that the children have easy access. There must be a variety and a small range of choice in the activities. Like with adults, we cannot force involvement. We become involved when we are interested. Young children are usually interested in doing what the adult is doing. Children pick up on the attitudes of adults. Do not regard the necessities of life as 'chores' but as part of the work of life. Enjoy the moment of mopping or wiping down the counter. The children sense that inner harmony. Check if the materials for sweeping, mopping, washing etc. are child-size, functional, stored in an orderly way and accessible. Make sure that the children have the time to do it. Value the process that they are going through without correcting them, or worrying only about the result.

*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 Ruby's article 'Managing the Day; Managing the Week' with other interesting questions raised during her webinar. Visit the donor's section in our website <https://montessori-india.org/>



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By
Alison Awes
AMI Elementary Trainer

October 5, 7, 8, 12, 14, 15, 19, 21 and 22, 2020
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This course is suitable for parents and anyone interested in the Elementary child.

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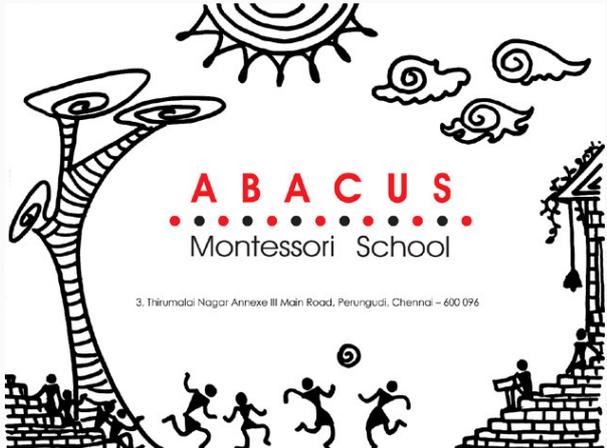
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