

THE TOUCH BOARD



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School Heads Meet

- Aditi Ganesh

The Indian Montessori Foundation (IMF) virtually met all the Montessori School Heads on October 17, 2020. Rukmini Ramachandran, Trustee, gave an overview of the work of the foundation and how it aimed to support the Montessori community.

Uma Shankar Kenche, Head of Samanga Montessori, Hyderabad shared how contented she felt by IMF's initiative to work hand in hand with schools. "IMF talks and workshops for parents to help overcome their anxiety during the current situation, seems to be the need of the hour" says Madhura Visweswaran, Head of Redwood Montessori School, Chennai



The schools brought forward common queries from parents and ideas were discussed to address them.

The Touch Board team wishes all its readers a joyous new year ahead!

City Events

BANGALORE

- Kavneet Chadha



Rochelle Dsilva along with participants at the workshop, which was designed to help people find a voice through their poetry.

Montessori Institute of Bangalore (MIB) curated an online poetry workshop ‘Dreaming in Metaphors’ for Montessori guides, parents and anyone interested in the technique and the spirit of poetry writing and recitation. The event was facilitated by Rochelle Dsilva, a celebrated poet, performer, artist, and creator of The Poetry Retreat, a poetry bootcamp for publishing and performing poetry.

The workshop that extended over four days between October 28 to November 6, 2020, aimed to simplify the nuances of poetry through writing exercises, guided visualizations, performance and breathing exercises and much more.

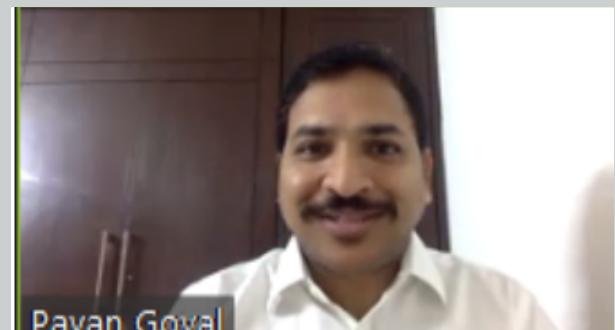
“I am more confident about writing poems”, shares Akshara Sriram on attending the workshop. She adds how the interactions made her realise that poetry coming from true emotions and performing poems rich in imagery, with appropriate tone and modulation is impactful, leaving a lasting impression on the listener.

HYDERABAD

- Vidhya Ramalingam

The Montessori Training and Research Trust (MTRT), plans to organize a series of talks, once a month to reach out to the Montessori community and bring them together on an online platform.

The first interaction was held on November 28, 2020, with Pavan Goyal, Founder of Blue Blocks Montessori School, about filing patents for drone designs by children in their elementary programme.



“It is not only important to see what the child learns, but also how they apply and what they can build.”

BLOCK YOUR DATES FOR THE UPCOMING IMF EVENTS !					
NO	DATE	TIME	EVENT	TOPIC	SPEAKER
1	09-Jan-21	4 - 5 PM	Online Talk	Supporting Freedom and Discipline at home	Teanaz Reporter
2	27-Feb-21	9 - 12 PM	Online Workshop	Parenting Challenges in the Global Village	Rukmini Ramachandran and Ruby Lau
3	27-Mar-21	4 - 5 PM	Online Talk	Offering Useful and Necessary Help to Children	Hemalatha Rangarajan

AMI Elementary and Assistants to Infancy Orientation Course - Bangalore

- Kavneet Chadha

Montessori Institute of Bangalore (MIB) held its first Elementary (6-12 years) and Assistants to Infancy (0-3 years) Orientation Courses, spread over three weeks of October and November. AMI (Association Montessori Internationale) Trainers, Alison Awes and Julia Hilson shared insights of the child from their several years of teaching experience.

Around 50 students of different demographics attended each of the online courses. They were introduced to the ideas of Maria Montessori and the needs of the child along with the role of the adult. Arushi Bhasin shares how they were given opportunities to prepare a piece of material, make a booklet and do some observations of elementary children and environments. She adds, “Overall the course was like a key that opened the doors to work towards understanding and supporting the elementary children and their curious and imaginative mind.”



“This was a well structured program that helped me understand the needs of a 6-12 year old.”

- Vitika Rastogi



“I was so happy to see people from different parts of the country coming together for one cause: serving mankind. The importance of a child's environment under 3 was highlighted beautifully.”

- Neha Gupta

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AMI
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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.

STARGAZING

With thousands of twinkling stars, it is fascinating to gaze at a clear night sky and its vastness. Identifying stars, constellations and planets, keeping track of their positions and finding information about them can be a great activity for children who are in awe of the universe and on a quest to understand it. StarWalk2 and SkyView Lite are apps that can ease our apprehensions of speaking with children about celestial bodies.

StarWalk2 is an astronomy guide for real time exploration of celestial bodies, be it day or night. It is especially wonderful to observe the night sky as we can see the stars in its natural luminescence. On downloading the app, we have to pin the location from where we will be observing the sky which can be

done automatically or manually from the settings tab. Then, all we need to do is to point our device to the sky and the app will show the real-time map of the sky and help identify planets, stars and constellations. After identification, we can click on the names of the stars or the constellations to see their 3D models and read information about them. It is also possible to search for celestial bodies manually and find their position in the sky map.

The 'Sky Live' option gives information about the moon phases, the sunrise and sunset times, daylight hours, and also rise and set times for Venus, Mercury, Saturn, and Jupiter for any particular date. The 'What's New' option presents the calendar of the latest celestial events. We can turn on the events notification button to make sure we never miss anything remarkable happening in the sky. Most interestingly, touching a clock-face icon at the upper-right corner of the screen allows selection of any date and time forward or backward in time to watch the night sky map of stars and planets and their position in different time periods. Without much requirements, just on the terrace with our unaided eyes we can introduce the children to the wonder of the universe and kindle the curiosity within them to explore more.

Follow the below link to download the app :

StarWalk2 - <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.vitotechnology>.

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Young Minds ! Young Innovators !

- Vidhya Ramalingam



“We got interested in drones when we saw a drone flying in our Drone Lab for the first time.”

- Elementary Children from Blue Blocks Montessori

The elementary child's natural curiosity, receptivity, independent thinking and constant yearning to discover the 'why' and 'how' of things have shaped young innovators at the Blue Blocks Montessori School, Hyderabad. A total of 18 children between 8 and 10 years, clubbed into five teams have filed 5 patents for the drones they have developed for tackling new-age challenges.

As many inventions have stemmed from the need to solve problems, these children also have different inspirations for designing their drones. While Aarini recalls how her grandfather, not being able to step out for a doctor's visit, set her off in designing a health monitoring drone, Nayonika and Akira visualised a drone that could deliver essentials.

Apart from these, children have also developed a savior drone which aims at rescuing children who are stuck in open deep borewells, a drone to monitor health parameters and also a security drone. While many of these drones are in the design or prototype stage, the early mover advantage will be with the students as the Intellectual Property of the solution will be with them.

This research and exercise gave us a lot of insights on features and functionality of the drones. It was a fulfilling moment to see all these things coming together in our prototype”, enthusiastically shared Sanshray, Ayushmaan and Dhairyा who have filed a patent for the savior drone. Trisha, Anya and Ananya, part of the medical assistance drone team drew inspiration from each other and from family and friends, adding more to their innovation.

The school has a Drone Research and Innovation Center that has supported and nurtured the young innovators. Pavan Goyal, Founder, Blue Blocks, says “We give special focus in creating innovation zones encouraging children to use their creative thinking and innovative approach in creating meaningful outcomes through skill-based and experiential learning.” The children shared how the mentors were always by their side encouraging their inquisitiveness in understanding things and providing any material they needed.

It is heartening to know that these children have future research plans too. They are thinking of a Drobot (drone+robot) that will help keep our surroundings clean, an Embot (emergency robot) which is a transformable vehicle that can help anyone move quickly even in traffic, drones that can deliver things to people during natural disasters and remote controlled ship which can be used for defence and rescue operations.



These curious young innovators are at their cosmic task of giving what they are capable of to the society. The Touch Board team wishes all the children great success in their future endeavours!

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.



Many of the practical life activities in the classroom like washing hands, mopping, washing clothes, watering plants and more involve water. There is always a steady need for this resource throughout the day. To keep consumption in check, many schools have adopted various means to conserve and reuse water.

- Leading the grey water from washing, mopping and other activities into the garden, keeping in mind to use natural cleaners in all activities
- Reusing water from pouring activities for watering plants
- Reducing the flow of the water in the taps
- Using tap misters
- Using a bucket and mug to wash garden tools, hands and legs after gardening instead of running water
- Using low flush toilets
- Rainwater harvesting

How do you conserve water? Share your thoughts with us at thetouchboard@gmail.com.

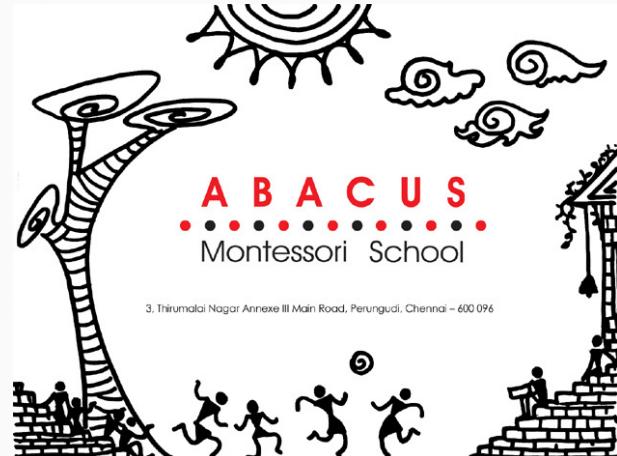
*We thank Prakruthi Montessori House of Children, Redwood Montessori School, Sparkles Kinder Kastle, Mindstein Montessori, Krtsa Montessori and Anthea Montessori House of Children for their input.

“—

"The greatness of the human personality begins at the hour of birth."

(Montessori, Maria, The Absorbent Mind, Indian Montessori Foundation, India, Chapter 1, Page 3)

—”



Your contribution, however small or large, can make all the difference to the Montessori work force in India !

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<https://montessori-india.org/endowment-fund/>

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...

Our Home

We have heard of the adage - 'Home is where the heart is' in many situations and we might have related to it in many ways. If we give a little more thought to it - for many of us the word 'home' brings images of people in it, the language, the smell, the landscape, the trees, the flowers and many more things. This image of what we call home, is different for different people. Whatever the image may be, it most often leads to the idea of feeling safe, secure and comfortable.

When we say, 'I feel at home here', what we really mean is, 'It is familiar for me, I know what to do with this and I feel safe doing it.' Our home is who we really are and what we create around us. The way we engage in our lives and the experiences that we have had make up for what we call home.

For the child between 6-12 years, the home is still the family - mother and father. Home is where they feel the safest. Although they are more social and outgoing now, the home still plays a great role. It is where they begin to build their personalities.

When a baby is born, we prepare our home, to accommodate the new baby's needs. As they grow up, we soon begin to forget that the home still needs to cater for their developmental needs. It is important to organise it to suit the child at different stages of their growth.

In order to set up our home for our children, we don't need to change it a lot. We need to keep in mind their physical and psychological abilities. Children between 6-12 years have incredible imagination and intellectual capacity. They also have the language to express themselves and share their ideas. Physically, they are taller, stronger and no longer need our support in reaching the shelves or using most of the appliances at home. We could take advantage of these and involve them in setting up our home. If they are involved in setting it up, the more likely they are to take care of it too.

Involving them supports their reasoning mind and their need to contribute to the family. Setting up designated spaces with discussions helps them have an idea of how we think. 'Do you think it will be useful to have rice in jars next to the dals in the kitchen cupboard or shall we put out only some and keep the rest in the storage cupboard? This way they understand where things are and the way their home functions too. Knowledge of home builds confidence in them and allows them to become a contributing member of the family.



Another aspect of home that could be organised to appeal to the growing intellect is the work space. It should allow them to work independently. A work area with a suitable table and chair, a space for a small variety of stationeries including pens and notebooks within easy reach of the work space is important.

They also need a variety of books, so it will be a good idea to look at the bookshelf with them. Decide on books that are appropriate for them and put away the ones that they have grown out of. This decision made with them helps us understand the kind of books we could invest in. They could even help make a budget for it.

By organising our home with reasoning and discussions, we are also guiding our children in understanding the intangible aspects of our home. The way we are at home, the discussions we have, our attitude towards society and people, and the way we utilise things at home all make up for the intangible aspects. This further leads to understanding the value system within the family. These tangible and intangible aspects are worth rethinking from time to time. They both need to work in tandem in order for us and our children to feel safe, secure and at harmony with home.

Nurturing Independence - A Parent's Experience

- Kavneet Chadha

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.

"Myra (2.5 years) is independent and vocal about her choices", says mother Anousha Ratarekar, pleasantly surprised at her daughter's independence in dressing, be it choosing or wearing. The whole cycle of removing pants, using the facility, flushing, cleaning hands and then wearing the pants back is achieved without assistance. "The entire process is satisfying for me as a parent and also her as a child."

Myra is given many opportunities at home with respect to food as well. Anousha believes that a child's independence with food is a process as initially more food ends up on the table than in their mouth.



"Everybody at home needs to work together to make the child independent. We are tempted inherently to help a child. It's difficult to make everybody understand why I am not feeding my 2 year old and letting her feed herself." But she believes that eventually eating by herself will aid her independence as well as her motor skills and an understanding of when she's eaten enough.

"It's wonderful to see such tiny hands try to string a bead, pour water from a jug in a glass, make their bed, clean, try to help in the kitchen and garden and much more." Anousha feels that the Montessori approach makes children compassionate human beings as it helps them understand the responsibilities towards themselves and their community. "We as parents love the feeling of children being dependent on us and always have a thought lingering that soon they will grow up and won't need us anymore. However while doing so, we restrict the child's growth and development."

Minds behind Books

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

- Roopa Sundar



▲ Tanvi Bhat
and
her illustrated works ▼

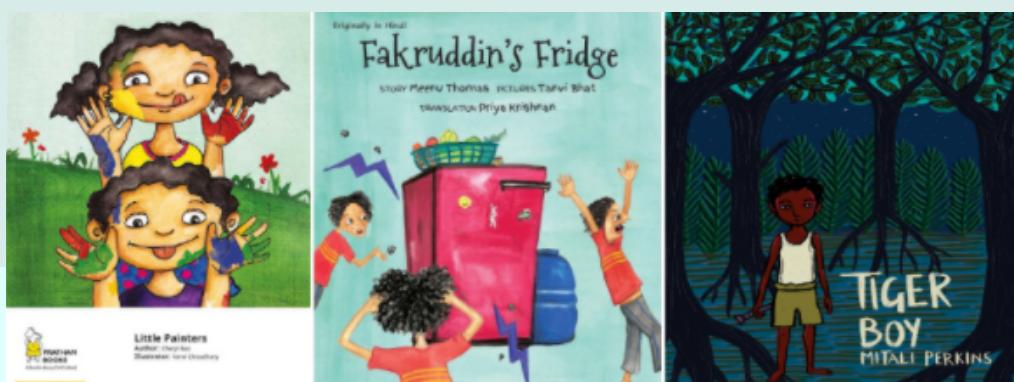
Books play an important role in a child's life allowing them to experience a world of possibilities. In this series we bring to you reflections of people behind children's literature.

"The story is most important. I like to build pictures that break stereotypes and create authentic vivid characters for children" says illustrator Tanvi Bhat whose images speak volumes and complement the written word. She has to her credit over twenty picture and chapter books and book covers having worked with publications like Amar Chitra Katha, Duckbill Books, Pratham Books and many more.

Her journey began as an animator, shortly after which she shifted gears to illustrating prompted by her interest in art and stories for children. The process of representing a story in pictures may sometimes be influenced by inputs from the author, while at other times she has the freedom to visualise the scenario in her own perspective, moving from pencil sketches to intricate watercolor images.

Drawing inspiration from everyday observations and other illustrators, Tanvi finds joy in creating characters, be it Shobha of *Dream Writer* inspiring children spin stories around their dreams and see it to completion or a lost Munni who goes on a journey through the states of India in *Bajrangi Bhaijaan* or an unlucky Sumi in *Lucky Girl* who just wants to get her hands on some yummy food in spite of having a super chef mother!

Step into the lives of any of these characters through Tanvi Bhat's illustrated books that are for children suitable across age groups and are available on www.amazon.in.



What's this Flower!

An Explorer's Guide to Local Flora

-Roopa Sundar



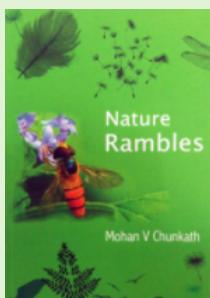
Children are innately curious about the environment around, plants being a big part of it. Unless adults take an interest in this natural world, we will be unable to share this richness and joy with children. To aid in this journey of awareness, we bring to you snippets of information about plants in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

IXORA



Another common flowering shrub found in many Indian gardens is the Ixora or Ixora coccinea belonging to the Rubiaceae family. This plant genus is considered to be native to Asia and the most commonly cultivated species is Ixora coccinea. The plant is a dense, multi-branched evergreen shrub, commonly 1.2 to 2 metres in height, but capable of reaching up to 3.6 metres. It has a rounded form, with a spread that may exceed its height.

The glossy, leathery, oblong leaves are about 10 cm long, with entire margins, and are carried in opposite pairs or as whorls on the stems. Small tubular, scarlet flowers in dense rounded clusters 5 to 13 cm across are produced almost all year long. There are numerous named cultivars differing in flower colour (yellow, pink, orange) and plant size. Several popular cultivars are dwarfs, usually staying under 1 metres in height.



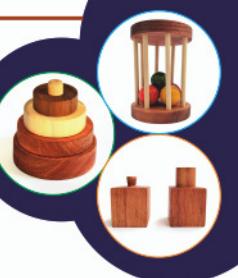
*These excerpts are from 'Nature Rambles' by Mohan V Chunkath, a collection of about 200 species of local insects, flowers and birds, proving to be an invaluable resource for budding nature enthusiasts, be it elementary (6-12 years) children or adults who are just beginning their explorations of the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



Madhavi Gaddam is an Auxiliary trainer for Elementary level. She holds AMI Montessori Diplomas at 3-6 and 6-12 levels and has also done her Orientation for 12-18. Madhavi runs Medha Montessori School in Hyderabad, India, which has primary, elementary and adolescent environments with a farm setup.

Question:

How can we use this current pandemic situation to connect children to the cosmic view and the oneness of humanity? What are the possibilities here?

Answered by Madhavi Gaddam :

As you imply in your questions COVID does present an opportunity to examine the interdependence of humans and their significant interactions with the environment.

However as you discuss matters with the children, it is important to look for reliable sources of information rather than read articles which present a one sided view. Also remember to let the child read and listen to them without leading them when they speak about anything that they have read. Reading my article may help you.

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 Madhavi's article 'Supporting the Elementary Child' with other interesting questions raised during her webinar. Visit the donor's 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