

THE TOUCH BOARD



Photo Courtesy : Vrithi Montessori School

Workshop - 'Observation: Uniting Theory & Practice'

-Aditi Ganesh, Chennai

Navadisha Montessori Foundation (NMF), Chennai conducted a three-day online workshop for about 120 participants from September 19 to 23, 2022. With schools having opened physically after the pandemic, AMI Primary Trainers Rukmini Ramachandran, Ruby Lau, Hemalatha Rangarajan and Ramya Sridhar focussed on the importance of observation through different approaches. Documents were shared with the participant to use for the purpose of observation.

To Rajeswari Priyanka, who is preparing to be back in the classrooms after a break, the workshop helped to revisit Montessori principles and was a reminder about the importance of shedding prejudice and of preparation.



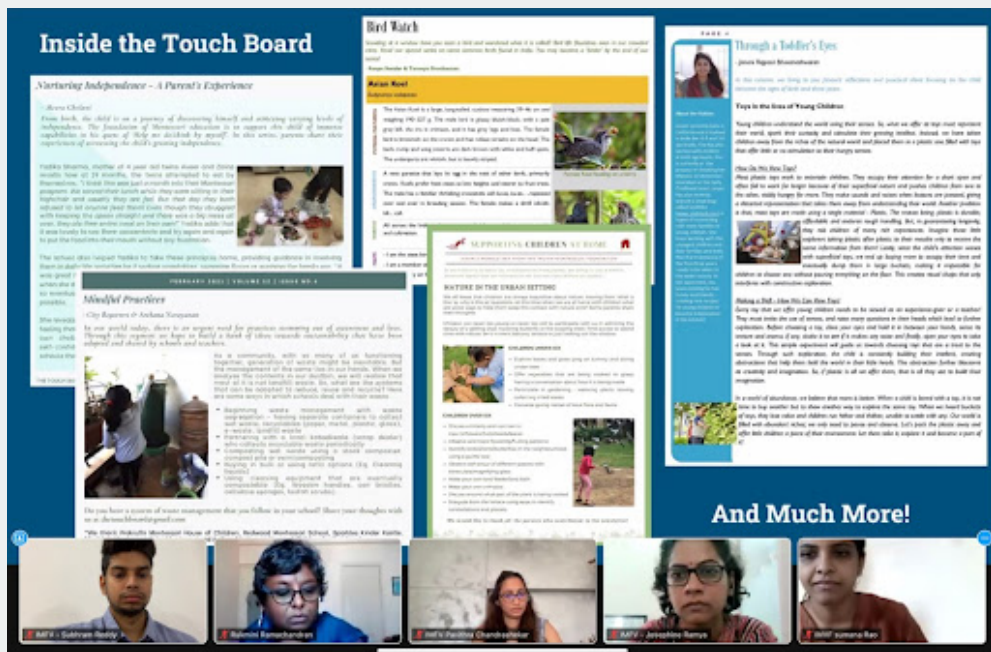
Photo Courtesy: Redwood Montessori School

IMF Orientation to AMI Students

- Kavneet Chadha

The IMF orientation meeting for the AMI students took place online on September 22, 2022. There were more than 100 participants from the training institutes in Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad. The students were introduced to the work of IMF and representatives from Montessori Matters, The Touch Board, Events, School Listing and Web Administration gave an overview of the work that takes place.

Fatima Rajkotwala from Mumbai shared how happy she was to be associated with IMF that has been instrumental in establishing and spreading the Montessori way in India. *"I look forward to the events and meetings organized and hope to contribute to the grander purpose of helping children and parents"*, she added. To Ramya Barithaya from Bangalore, seeing fellow students from across the country made her realise that she was not alone in working towards being an educator and joining the community.



"It was an inspiring meeting especially for a current student to see the bigger picture and all the people who are doing great work behind the scenes to make IMF run on a day to day basis! This has definitely spurred me on to volunteer and be a part of something bigger"
 - Vaishnavi Shrikant from Bangalore

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Peek into the Insect World

Children are innately curious about the environment around them, insects 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 these fascinating creatures in our very own backyards.

- Jezreena Jezer

Weaver Ant

The Weaver Ants (*Oecophylla smaragdina*) live on trees. They range from 5 to 10mm in length. Their size is relative to their role in the colony. They are orange or red in colour. The queen is often a combination of brown and green. Weaver ants are famous for the living bridges they make. They hang by holding each other, swing and reach the other end to make a living bridge.

Weaver ants construct their nests by using larval silk like thread and weaving a number of leaves together. They choose mango trees or large-leaved trees to build their nest. They bend the leaves into usable positions by grabbing the leaves with their legs and mandibles. Their colonies can be extremely large. They can consist of more than a hundred nests over numerous trees.



Weaver ants are highly territorial. They aggressively defend their area against intruders. The first line of defence consists of the aged ants and this is called 'barracks'. When trees sense danger, they summon the ants which in turn comes to defend the tree. Some indigenous farmers use weaver ants against agricultural pests as these ants prey on insects that are harmful to the host trees. They are carnivorous and prey primarily on small insects and honeydew excreted by small insects.

Their bites are painful and can cause intense discomfort. They inject the bite with formic acid that they produce. Additionally, when a weaver ant is angered, it spits out the acid. There are some communities of people who collect the pupae and larvae of weaver ants for multiple purposes like food, traditional medicine ingredients or bait for fishing.



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Chennai's first IMF onsite event Workshop - 'Understanding Core Montessori Principles'

- Aditi Ganesh, Chennai

Chennai's first onsite event post pandemic took place on September 10, 2022 at Navadisha Montessori Foundation (NMF). The three hour workshop organized for the support staff focussed on Montessori principles and acknowledging their contribution to the lives of young children. AMI Primary Trainers, Hemalatha Rangarajan and Ramya Sridhar conducted the workshop in Tamil for a group of 40 attendees from different schools across Chennai.



"We understood how important it is to step in and help the child only when it is really necessary."

- Support Staff of Navadisha Montessori School

Through practical demonstrations and videos, the idea of useful help was also depicted. This helped everyone understand their role and gave a new perspective of viewing children. Sheela Mathankumar and Mahalakshmi shared that among the many errors that they were able to self-reflect upon during the workshop, trying to speak in English while communicating to the children was what really hit hard. *"The trainers stressed on the importance of multilingual and rich language development and how we should stick to the language we are comfortable in, which is only Tamil. This gave us complete satisfaction"*.

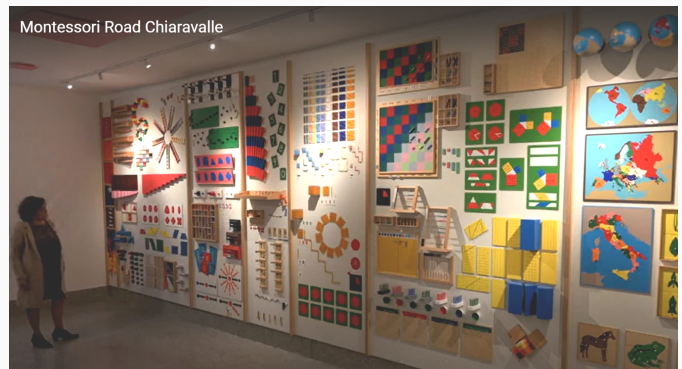
"When we find children cute, we tend to hug or cuddle them. Today I got to understand how we cannot touch a child without his/her consent", shared Meena from The Trust Child.

Montessori Road

Montessori Road is the video showcase of the opening of Casa Montessori Chiaravalle, Maria Montessori's childhood home in Chiaravalle, Italy. Carolina Montessori, Maria Montessori's great granddaughter, inaugurated the opening of Casa Montessori Chiaravalle on December 11, 2021. The short film takes us through various rooms which give us an insight on the life and work of Maria Montessori.

To find out more about the project visit the website <https://www.casamontessorichiaravalle.it/en/>

To view the video check out this link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSs4YbtULwI>



Beginnings of Life - The First Year

Vibhuti Jain, the first Indian AMI Assistants to Infancy (0-3 years) Trainer lays focus on the child in the very first year of life and how adults can prepare both themselves and create a loving space to welcome and nurture the spirit of new life.



The child is born with the potential to learn any number of languages that their environment offers. The adult needs to get down to the child's eye level and show interest in their conversations, gestures, babbles; even when they do not understand what the child is saying. When an emotionally available adult responds to their verbal and non-verbal cues and communicates in a back and forth manner, children put in all their energies to communicate even more. The adult also needs to use precise vocabulary, and well-articulated rich language as they are directly responsible for providing a rich language environment.

Photo Courtesy : Samporna Vembunathan

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Offerings to a Montessori Environment

Parents are always looking to make meaningful contributions to the Montessori community during special occasions. In this series, Montessori teachers share ideas for gifting to a Montessori environment - Toddler, Primary & Elementary.

- Roopa Sundar & Kavneet Chadha

Stories are an essential part of language development and understanding the world around, making books integral in this journey. A book corner/library is a key component in the arrangement of any Montessori classroom which makes having a collection of children's books necessary. Though it is wonderful to pick from a wishlist that a school might have, there are some broad ideas to keep in mind while gifting literature to Montessori environments.

"Books are always welcome, provided parents know the kind of books we read", shares Roli Arun, an educator. With books, we have to take into account the age group of the children. A rule of thumb while buying books for very young children is for them to be reality based. We have to look for books that offer stories that are close to their life experiences. Fantasy and mythology follow later and are welcome in Elementary.

In the Toddler community a variety of board books with classified vocabulary and very short stories with large illustrations are helpful. In the Primary a varying range of books are welcome as the children range between 3 and 6 years. Starting from books with less text and large pictorial representations to more text and even a few chapter books. There are also books that offer facts about different flora and fauna and land and water forms. In Elementary, along with fiction, children are exposed to a range of books on the workings of the world around, history of the world, stories of valour, encyclopedias and atlases, different ecosystems, interconnections of life; all in a simplified format.



Photo Courtesy : (Top) Karuna Garuda
(Bottom) Redwood Montessori School



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Demystifying Montessori Materials

Many times, the child's reply to 'What did you do in class today?' mystifies the adult even more. Either incomprehensible names or mundane activities are encountered. This series brings to light how and why some materials are set up and how they are used by the children in a Primary Montessori community (3-6 years).

- Archana Narayanan & Khyati Shah



Photo Courtesy : (left) Kalpagam Montessori, (right) Kidoz Montessori School

Red Rods

In a Montessori classroom, we see that all aspects of dimension are given to the children through experience. The Red Rods are, as the name suggests, 10 rods that vary in length from 10 centimetres to 1 metre. The children experience the differences in the length as they make 10 journeys from the shelf to their work space; typically a mat, carrying the rods individually. Once they have all the rods on the mat laid out at random, they begin to systematically compare the rods and arrange them lengthwise.

After sufficient experience, the material also offers itself to group games where children challenge each other to find, within the rods, the one that is shorter or longer than what they are holding. And, this brings the children also to explore the language involved – “long, longer, longest, short, shorter, shortest” as they get older – giving a name to their experience.

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Montessori – Misconception to Learning

- Meera Ghelani

The term 'Montessori' has been used and understood in many and different ways. In this segment, parents share how their perception of Montessori and child development has changed and grown along with their child in a Montessori School.

Bhairavi Saturdekar, mother of 5 year Ayank Choughule chose Montessori as she believed it focused on following the child and leading them to be independent individuals. However she always had doubts about freedom. *“I used to think that it meant letting the child do whatever he or she wanted to do without stopping them.”* Now she understands that freedom comes with limits and responsibilities as well.



The Child, The Explorer



In this segment, Rajini Nitin Talreja brings to the forefront the workings of the mind of young children and how we can best support their exploration of the world.

Rajini stumbled upon Montessori when she shifted gears from the Tech industry. She is an AMI Primary Diploma holder and has immense experience assisting and guiding young children. She currently works as an Academic Coordinator for the Children's House Community and supports the adults in keeping the space enriching for the children.

Walking with Children

The mere act of heading out into a new environment or space is an opportunity to discover the world. One of the most common exercises that we can practice is walking with children. This helps the child control his body, develop balance and perfect equilibrium, as well as to strengthen the mind's control of its body's movements. Ideally walks can be beneficial for all age groups even if the children can't technically walk yet! Children get to hear, see, smell, and feel different things from the comfort of their stroller seat, even if they can't interact with the world around them yet.

Few things to keep in mind when walking with your child

- Try not to hurry - Walk at your child's pace
- Avoid distraction - try to be in the moment with your child
- Point out details along the path of your walk for your child
- Encourage them to carry a small bag or a container to collect things they discover. The things from nature, which they collect, yet awareness of not plucking leaves and flowers.
- Provide rich experience - different type of terrain during these walks (beach, rocks, logs etc)
- Suitable clothing for the suitable weather
- Give them space to explore and step back
- Young children have desire to challenge themselves so let them

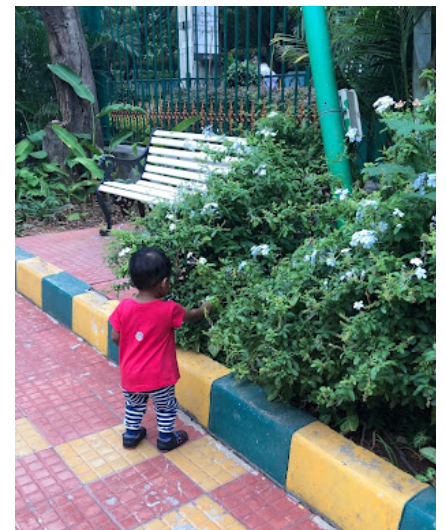


Photo Courtesy: Karuna Garuda

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Books in the IMF Corner

IMF has published several Montessori books to create awareness about the philosophy in the community and to support students training to lead Montessori classrooms. Montessorians share their favourite snippets from the IMF publication.



“Any child who is self- sufficient, who can tie his shoes, dress or undress himself, reflects in his joy and sense of achievement the image of human dignity, which is derived from the sense of independence“

Maria Montessori, The Child in the Family, Chapter 6, Page 48

“The tasks that children do at this age might look very simple to us but this will help them to develop into strong and capable adults who will be ready to take on the world. By offering them freedom to choose, to work and to look after themselves we let them discover the world in their way and teach themselves. By doing so we also let the child know we value them and this will give them confidence. And this idea that education should prepare the child for their adult life will stay with me forever.“

Monica Sheguri, Student on the AMI Primary Diploma Course, Hyderabad

To get your copy of *The Child in the Family*, visit www.montessori-india.org/store/

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Adolescents at Work



Adolescents setting up drip irrigation in the terrace garden, Pragnya Montessori School

Over the past few years, the 'Erdkinder' program has been gaining momentum, establishing strong roots for the AMI Adolescent Training (12 - 18 years) to take-off here in India. In this series, we bring to you glimpses of the adolescent community engaged in purposeful work across various prepared environments.

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Frequently Asked Questions Answered by AMI Trainers!

We often wonder during the developmental years if we, as caretakers of young children, are making the right decisions and providing our children with the support they need. In this segment, we have trained educationalists answer a series of queries and help us in this journey.



Pavithra Rajagopalan is an AMI Primary Trainer. She has over 20 years of experience in the field of Montessori education. Pavithra is faculty at the Sir Ratan Tata Institute, Bombay, India. She is also part of the faculty for the Diploma course in Taiwan and Beijing and has conducted Assistant/ Orientation courses in India, Israel, Singapore and China.

Question:

When can I introduce writing to my child and what kind of preparation can be done?

Answered by Pavithra Rajagopalan :

Depending on the school your child goes to, there is probably already a plan for leading your child to writing. No matter the method at school, there are some things that we can do at home though. But they may not necessarily involve the actual act of writing! This requires us to also take away the focus from holding a pencil and writing the letters of the alphabets as the final goal. Instead, provide lots of spoken language input through books, stories, songs, conversations. The home is filled with people that the child loves. This is where the child builds a connection with the language(s) that are spoken by these loved ones. Having a strong connection, pride, and rich vocabulary in the language(s) of the home is one of the most important prerequisites for writing.

Additionally, to hold a pencil, the fingers and the hands have to be prepared. Life at home is full of opportunities for that. Washing dishes, dusting, sweeping, making the bed, preparing the vegetables for cooking later, baking, gardening - these are replete with both fine motor and gross motor movement. And all homes have different kinds of art activities available for the children anyway. When all of these are available to the children in their homes, they augment the child's capacities. If your child is going to a Montessori school, they also mirror the child's experiences in school. And as is the case all the time, the final requirement is time. So, we have to create all these experiences for the child and then wait. Writing will happen in its own time and magically, on its own.



Photo Courtesy : Shilpa Preetham

AMI MEMBERSHIP

Membership of AMI is open to all individuals. AMI members are a stronghold in the Montessori community, putting Montessori education in the spotlight and making a difference to the lives of children. AMI membership brings with it: educational publications such as the AMI Journal, digital newsletters keeping you up to date with the latest on AMI's work and news from across the globe, and discounted offers at congresses, refreshers and other events.

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IMF EVENTS

2022-23



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Day	Month	Time	Event	Topic	Speaker
Saturday	27-Aug-22	4 PM - 5 PM	Talk	Relevance of Montessori Today	Virginia Viscovic
Saturday	22-Oct-22	4 PM - 5 PM	Talk (Online)	Supporting the Intellect in the Second Plane	Carol Hicks
Thursday	27-Oct-22	4 PM - 5 PM	Talk Patasala Montessori School, Chennai	Raising Joyful Readers	Rukmini Ramachandran
Saturday	19-Nov-22	9 AM - 12 PM	AMI Students Workshop (Online)	Stories in Human Life	Gowri Ramnarayan
Saturday	19-Nov-22	9 AM - 12 PM	Workshop RTI Centre, Mumbai	Setting limits for all planes of development	Beena Parekh
Thursday	24-Nov-22	4 PM - 5 PM	Talk Prakruthi Montessori School, Hyderabad	Helping young children live in harmony with nature	Deepa Sreekumar
Thursday	24-Nov-22	4 PM - 5 PM	Talk Nivriti, Bangalore	Support Staff listening to children	Shalini Tilak
Saturday	26-Nov-22	4 PM - 5 PM	Talk (Online)	Living peacefully with Children	Irene Fafalios
Thursday	19-Jan-23	5 PM - 6 PM	Talk Savi Montessori School, Mumbai	Reading your child's milestones	Geeta Savla
Saturday	28-Jan-23	4 PM - 5 PM	Talk (Online)	Supporting the Development of Movement in the First Plane	Connie Black
Saturday	25-Feb-23	4 PM - 5 PM	Talk (Online)	Preparing the Child's Environment	Janet McDonnell

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, 8 issues: July, 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 cm.)

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

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

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Do send in articles or news that you wish to share, to thetouchboard@gmail.com !