



Working Hands, Building Minds

Child sorting cards with leaf shapes

Photo Courtesy - Kinderhome



'Concentration' is not a term generally associated with young children. In this photo series, we bring you a glimpse of the Primary environment (3-6 years) with children focused for extended periods of time in work that is challenging, developmentally appropriate and of their choice.

City Events

AMI Primary Diploma Course Graduation

Kavneet Chadha | Bangalore

"It has been a profound experience and I have come away with a deep respect and awe for the universal child and a determination to do my part in the Montessori community." - Shrikanth Vaishnavi, Graduate

The 5th Primary batch of the Montessori Institute of Bangalore (MIB) graduated on October 2, 2023. Ramya Barithaya shares how it was a day of celebration and a much-deserved day of fun after the roller coaster journey of learning. It was also an excellent opportunity to meet families who had extended a pillar of support. *"The course is extremely intense and rightly so if we look back at the kind of integration, unlearning and relearning that is required from the adult mind. We were the 'children' here, but we were also spouses, mothers and daughter in laws who come with a life already full of responsibilities. Our work, though a huge individual achievement, is also a collective result of several individuals silently working and sacrificing in the background to make this happen"*, adds Shrikanth.



Kavya Chandrashekar, Director of MIB, Suneeta Madnani and Anahita Gandhi, Co-Directors of the Primary Course, felicitated the students during the ceremony

Workshop - ‘Importance of Practical Life’

Team MTRT | Hyderabad

The Montessori Training and Research Trust (MTRT) organised a three evening online workshop between September 18 and 22, 2023. The workshop that included national and international participants, looked at the importance of movement in education and the work of the hands that aids the development of character. The workshop also discussed how and what things to consider to offer useful help to children.

The workshop motivated Pauleena to look back at her environment and helped her rethink, reorganize and repair the environment not just during holidays but every day. *“The principle that movement : work : character : life : cosmic task has been presented with emphasis on our role in the environment and the child psyche.”* To many participants like Ridhima and Jaspeet Kaur, this discussion served as a great refresher to stay on the right path to help children develop optimally.



“So often, the daily grind of being a Montessori educator can make us lose track of the importance of Practical Life. The role Practical Life plays in aiding the child’s self construction and allowing his true personality to unfold cannot be stressed more.” - Carolyn

IMF Talk - ‘Parenting Beyond Rewards’

City Reporters | Chennai, Bangalore, Mumbai, Hyderabad

The Indian Montessori Foundation (IMF) organised the talk on October 5, in schools across four cities, aiming to reach out to the parent community. Conventionally, parents and teachers have approved or disapproved of a child’s behavior with punishments and rewards. But in the long term, how effective is this style? AMI Primary Trainers Pavithra Rajagoplan, Suneeta Madnani, Ramya Sridhar and Auxiliary Trainer Madhavi Ravindra led the participants to re-think their relationships and communication with their children.



“The child reveals his potential if we are ready to understand and observe by being there for the child without any interference of external rewards and punishment.” - Anjali Tejani, a mother and Primary student



“What resonated with me was the idea of involving children in everyday activities so that the child can eventually be independent in life” - Ninu Ahluwalia, Parent to a 4 Year Old



“The idea of the inner radar concept and the example she gave, the importance of intrinsic motivation and mindfully giving feedback to children were my biggest takeaways.” - Aishwarya Ramachandran, Parent



“A talk where we were able to connect ourselves to the situation as it reflected genuine and practical experiences from everyday life” - Yakima, Educator

Demystifying Montessori Materials

Prabha Karthik



Cosmic Education that is offered in Montessori Elementary (6-12 years) is synonymous to offering the universe with its interdependencies and interrelationships, to the child. Prabha, an AMI Auxiliary Elementary Trainer, shares some of her favourite materials and how the elementary children explore with them.

Bead Bars

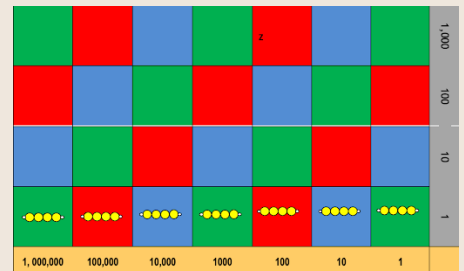
Montessori math materials stand out as some of the most versatile and well-known tools in the Montessori environment. Dr. Maria Montessori did not merely conceive of these materials as teaching aids but as developmental tools that make abstract mathematical ideas and concepts accessible to children in a concrete way. The magic unfolds when children choose to engage with these materials using their hands, allowing them to discover and understand the underlying concepts through repeated interaction.



One shining example of the versatility of Montessori math materials is the color-coded bead bars. When placed on a checkerboard, the bead bars reveal the relationship between the value of the bar and the square it occupies (for example, the value of a 4-bar on a unit square is 4 while that of a 4-bar placed on the tens square is 40). When we do multiplication, children can understand the role of a multiplicand and multiplier when we take the quantity, a bead bar of 6, seven times in order to multiply 6×7 . They can skip-count and check that 6×7 is actually 42. When they lay out these bars to explore multiplication tables, they can understand the idea of common multiples sensorially. They can see that when we take a bead bar of 4, four times, we make a square of 4, 42.

Every time they use these bars in the various processes, their mind and body come together as they are actively engaged in thinking and placing the bars and they receive an impression of the intellectual process made visible. Every math activity in the elementary is presented to groups of children who need to each do their part, wait for their turn and collaborate in order to complete the problem.

In essence, Montessori math materials are not just tools; they embody the Montessori philosophy of hands-on, experiential learning and empower children to become active, engaged learners, setting them on a path toward a deep and lasting love for math.



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Self Care - Stories from Home

Kavneet Chadha

This series brings stories from Montessori homes, of how the environment is prepared for children to function on their own and take care of themselves at varying levels.

Shubhasree Sunder Rajan, mother of 7 year old Maitreya and 5 year old Maadhurya works as an AMI Primary teacher in Bangalore. She shares how she sought to at first understand the developmental changes in her growing children and how to best create an environment that supported their needs and higher levels of independence. *“The concept of independence does not restrict to only in terms of doing, but also extends to thinking for themselves. Independence of the mind and the intellect is pronounced as the child transitions from the ‘what’ questions to ‘why & how’, to learn about their environment.”*

The idea of independence was embedded in the lifestyle of the children. Shubhasree shares an example of how art was set up in a way that the children could organise themselves and then later it extended to them being involved in maintaining the supplies, planning and procurement as well. To begin, the area of work was identified. Color coded boxes for sorting were initiated where the children together decided on the arrangement; like orange box for stationary and art paraphernalia, blue box for chalk, colors etc. Hence the winding up was also in an orderly manner. They could choose from the supplies they had and work when inspired to do so.

The limitations in place were the procurement of supplies; like glitter, glue, paints, colour paper were for a certain period of time. Children planned on how to manage the supplies for the month, and then listed out what was required. We also had discussions of reusing and repurposing the art. There was only one set of each that they shared against the idea of individual supplies.

“This reminds me of an incident when they received two sets of art supplies each, as a return gift when visiting a friend. My older daughter returned one set, saying that one was enough as it would be an excess that can be shared with another person”



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Dr. Maria Montessori

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A Parent's Journey in Montessori

Kavneet Chadha

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.



Gnanvardhini Hitnal was looking for a school for her younger child Abhay, when she stumbled upon Montessori. When she began her search, she had no idea about the education system. *"First, we went to a school where they had Montessori materials but they said that the children were not using them. Then after a few days we got to know about another school and gave one more try."* This is where they got a glimpse of Montessori education and principles.

She then realised how the child sized materials were integral in the classroom, but combined with other ideas. Concepts were introduced from simple to complex, while giving one challenge at a time. Children learn when they are ready and at their pace. Children grow to respect others' work, decisions/ choices and awaiting their turn. Children learn individually as well as in collaboration with other children. They also learn to help other children when they are in need. There are no rewards or punishments given. There are no tests or competition. Children learn to take care of themselves, others and the environment around them.

After experiencing Montessori as a parent, Gnanvardhini was inspired to learn further, which prompted her to do the Diploma course. She now works as a Montessori Guide in a Primary classroom in Bangalore, while Abhay has moved into the Elementary Program.

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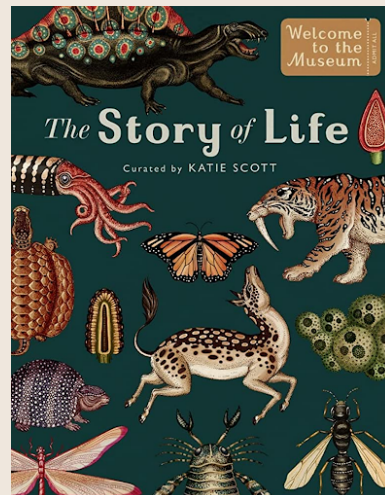
Ashima Sheth

Fact finding through different means in answer to a question that arises within the child is part of the daily work in an elementary classroom. This series brings a resource of research books that lends itself to such quests of children.


'The Story of Life' by Katie Scott is a wonderful book to have in an elementary classroom. It serves as an excellent companion or research material following the Second Great Story - Timeline of Life. This book not only sparks children's interest in the prehistoric natural world but also cultivates a sense of wonder and respect for all living things.

The book provides rich opportunities for exploration and research into each unique and extraordinary life forms in each geological era and period – on land, sea and sky. Each life form, whether tiny bacteria or Ice Age megafauna, has been chosen to represent its period in earth's history. This active engagement promotes wonder, scientific inquiry, and critical observation skills especially when they encounter life forms that are not there on the timeline.

The author's exquisite artwork, inspired by traditional medical and botanical illustrations, not only adds visual appeal but also aligns with Dr. Montessori's emphasis on aesthetics and beauty in the learning environment. The illustrations bring the life forms to life, stimulating the imagination and creating a deeper connection with the subject matter as they can be drawn or recreated by sculpting them into clay models in the classroom. This book is available on amazon at the cost of Rs. 482/-.



Ashima Sheth started her Montessori journey 13 years back as a Primary Montessori guide and then moved to study and work with Elementary children in Mumbai and Pune.




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CONFERENCE UPDATES

Sneak Peak into some Speakers at the Conference! Register Soon!



Zai Whitaker will bring forward 'Stories from Nature'

Zai Whitaker has had a lifelong interest in conservation and writing, having grown up in a family of naturalists and writers. She is a founder of the Madras Crocodile Bank and the Irular Women's Society. Zai is the author of twenty books, most of them on the environment, for children. They include Kali and the Rat Snake, Andamans Boy (both published by Tulika), and Termite Fry (Bloomsbury). She has also written articles, film scripts and short stories, and worked in three schools, Kodaikanal International, Abacus Montessori and Outreach.



Baiba Krumins Grazzini will focus on 'Nature and Harmony: The Foundations of Montessori Education'

AMI trainer, lecturer and examiner, Baiba Krumins Grazzini is Director of Elementary training at the Fondazione Centro Internazionale Studi Montessoriani (Bergamo, Italy), an AMI Training Centre which was founded by Mario Montessori in 1961. She has been involved with Bergamo's AMI Elementary training course since 1975, became an AMI Elementary trainer in 1986, and a Director of training in 1992. She is a seminar leader of the Elementary Training of Trainers Programme, and served on the AMI Pedagogical Committee from 2004 until 2013.





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- Nature and Harmony
- Lessons from Nature
- Biophilia: A love for Nature
- Living with Nature
- Stories from Nature
- Sustainable School Practices
- Creating Responsible Citizens



Montessori and NEP

Aparna Iyer

Aparna Iyer, AMI Primary Auxiliary Trainer and Director of Global Montessori Centre (an exclusive early years division of the NPS Group of Schools) shares her thoughts of how aligned the National Education Policy is with Montessori and what implications the National Curriculum Framework will have on our work.



The NEP* 2020 is a landmark policy document for the nation having reconfigured the curricular and pedagogical structure of formal school education, making it relevant and corresponding to the developmental needs and interests of children at different stages of their development. Education for children in the 3-6 age group has been brought into the formal pedagogical structure, for the first time in post-independent India. This has been done in cognizance of the scientific fact that over 85% (as per the NEP document) of a child's brain development occurs prior to age 6 and therefore the critical importance of appropriate care and stimulation of the brain in the early years.

The NEP emphasises on flexible, multi-level and activity-based learning for the Foundational stage; experiential learning and exploring relations among different subjects in the Middle stage; and, multidisciplinary study with greater scope for critical thinking, greater attention to life aspirations, and flexibility and choice of subjects in the Secondary stage. Across all stages of education, the NEP gives importance to holistic, discovery-based, inquiry-based, discussion-based and analysis-based learning. The NEP requires the content to focus on key concepts, ideas, applications and problem-solving; and for teaching and learning to be interactive, creative, collaborative and exploratory for deeper and more meaningful learning.

Montessori is a completely development based pedagogy, with the prepared environment, content and approach differing to meet the interests and needs of the child in each stage of their development. The critical periods of development and the absorbent nature of the child's mind till the age of 6, was recognized as far back as in the early 1900s by Dr. Maria Montessori. Montessori education across all stages by deliberate design, is flexible, multi-level, activity-based, experiential, exploratory, multidisciplinary and everything else mentioned in the NEP. In Montessori, the prepared environment and the content is always rooted in the local culture, also incorporating its languages and the art forms. This is done to support the child's adaptation – to the world in general and to their immediate society. Montessori education in general results in strong academic outcomes as its teaching and learning method is scientific. However, a distinct aspect of Montessori is that when it is implemented with high fidelity, it intrinsically and naturally helps develop individuals who are independent, self-confident, responsible and in harmony within and with the outside world.

This is possible only because of the unique prepared environment, principles, approach and method which come together in a well-run Montessori school. It is not possible to replicate the same holistic outcome, if isolated parts of the Montessori method are adopted and applied in schools.

As Per the NEP 2020

“The purpose of the education system is to develop good human beings capable of rational thought and action, possessing compassion and empathy, courage and resilience, scientific temper, and creative imagination, with sound ethical moorings and values. It aims at producing engaged, productive, and contributing citizens for building an equitable, inclusive, and plural society as envisaged by our Constitution.” The Montessori method of education is designed to do just this. The outcomes envisioned by the NEP are in complete alignment with the outcomes Montessori has been delivering for over 100 years now.

The NEP gives direction to the NCF** to develop a curriculum based on the vision of the NEP, incorporating the knowledge, skills and capacities appropriate for each stage of education. Montessori fits neatly into the framework with nearly every element already in place. The one aspect that leaders in Montessori education will need to develop further and in conformation with the NCF, is assessment. We need to clearly define, observable competencies that can be assessed systematically, and learning outcomes, so that teachers can observe and track learning to respond to the needs of the children continually. Teachers of Montessori schools need to possess tools with which they can do assessment before, for, of and as learning. This is essential not only for ensuring that each child is scaffolded and supported to stay on their path of learning and development toward reaching their full potential, but also for reporting outcomes to all stakeholders and for enabling quantitative data collection for statistical representations and research purposes.



According to the NEP activity based learning in a classroom stimulates brain development.

Photo courtesy: Prodigy International Montessori School

* NEP 2020 – National Educational Policy 2020

** NCF – National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage 2022

Useful Objects for an Infant/Toddler

Janani Bhuvaneshwaran

This series talks about essential items that are ideal in a child's home from birth to the age of three. Janani Bhuvaneshwaran tells us about the purpose of these objects, the appropriate time to introduce them and the duration for which the child can utilize them.



Containers for Opening and Closing

Purpose : To challenge their emerging fine motor skills and further explore their home environment

Duration : Around 15 months until they are no longer interested



Toddlers like to open and close containers of different sizes and shapes. They like to mix and match the lids to see what happens. We see this so often when they seat themselves on the kitchen floor and simply reach for different sized bowls to stack, open and close. This exploration may take them in different directions - they may match the lid with the appropriate container or they might stack the containers one atop the other. They enjoy the repeated movement of opening the lids either by unscrewing them or lifting them and placing them back on the container. To support this exploration, a small basket or tray with a few containers will keep toddlers challenged both mentally and physically as this exploration

*Janani Bhuvaneshwaran is an AMI certified Montessori guide with diplomas at the 0-3 and 3-6 years level. She works at a Young Children's Community in San Jose, California. "Young children have an infectious and unbiased curiosity towards knowing the world which draws me towards them."

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Approach to Mistakes

Roopa Sundar & Meera Ghelani

Errors are part and parcel of the process of learning that disappear with time as the child becomes adept. In this series, Montessori teachers share how mistakes are approached in the classroom and how children are empowered in this process.

"In a Montessori class children are free to make mistakes and learn from them" - Farzana Virani, Primary Guide

Many materials in a Montessori environment show the child when there is an error, like the cylinder blocks, wherein when cylinders are not placed in their sockets there might be pieces not fitting in the end. And this gets the child to try again.

Karuna Lulla from Mumbai shares how she observed a child working with spindle boxes, where they count the number of spindles and place as the number in the compartment says. When the spindles are not placed in the appropriate slots, they either run short or have more of the spindles left, which sends them a message. *"In this case, the best way for me would either be to represent the activity after a few days offering a pause to ensure there is repetition in counting the numbers or an indirect presentation by offering the presentation to someone at a place and time where this child would be interested in observing."*

Sometimes the materials don't give feedback and the way the child works is based on his growing perception, as with the pink tower. *"I will not correct a tower that is misarranged as with repetition and observing other children, the child will get there"*, shares Farzana.

She adds that there are instances where the child might not be able to build proportionately on the mat, might place it so while winding up. And If it's placed back out of proportion, after the child leaves the space, the adult or sometimes some other child might arrange it in proportion on display.



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A B A C U S

Montessori School

Ode to Nature - Essays by Children

Going with the theme of our upcoming conference, Elementary children from across the country share about the beauty and generosity of earth and how they wish to preserve it.

My inspiration from nature and how it adds value in my life

Aadhya Ramini, 9.5 years, Hyderabad

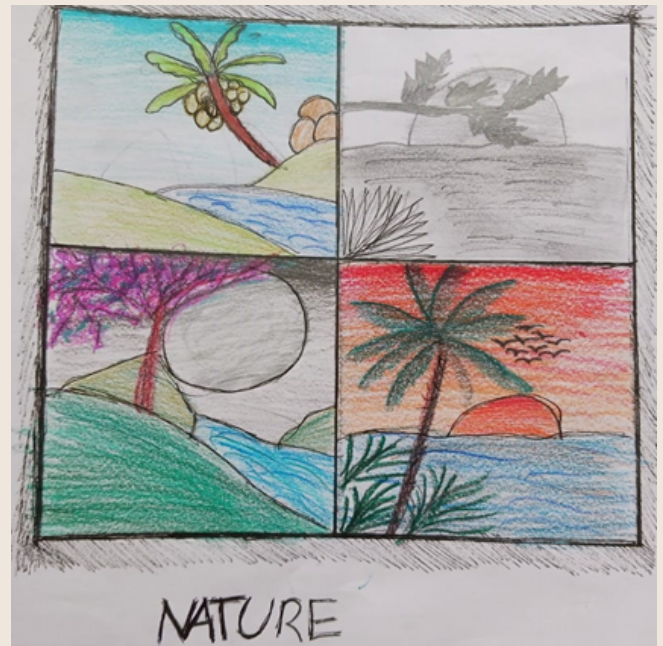
Nature with its vast beauty inspires me a lot. It helps me to stay calm and positive. The beautiful views of the high-rise mountains and the melodious chirping of the birds, the greenery creates a good impact on my wellbeing.

I would like to thank nature for what all it has given that really helps me feel good. For example the sun with different shades during the sunrise and sunset gives me a fresh mood, swaying trees remind me about my good feelings and the oxygen is the best and biggest value to live.

I would like to mention my favourite part of nature which is one and only the moon which shines brightly all night. I feel that it is the most beautiful satellite ever.

The next element in nature which gives us a life lesson is water. On the beach it carries dust while coming front but then while going back it leaves all the mud or dust. So that is how life has to be. No matter how many problems are coming, just leave them and carry on with your goal. Beaches also remind me to stay peaceful every day.

Another element of nature which inspires me is air. It talks about the purity of nature and tells us how pure our heart should be. It is also giving us a gentle reminder for us to have humanity.



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Membership of AMI is open to all individuals. AMI members form an active community with a strong international presence, 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 their latest work and news from across the globe, and discounted offers at congresses, refreshers and other events.

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EVENTS 2023-2024

SAT, 15 JUL 2023	4-5 PM	BRINGING UP SELF-CONFIDENT CHILDREN SPEAKER: RUKMINI RAMACHANDRAN	 ONLINE
THU, 5 OCT 2023	4-5 PM	PARENTING BEYOND REWARDS	ONSITE
FRI 19 JAN 2024 SAT 20 JAN 2024	10 AM-4 PM	CONFERENCE: PRAKRITI SPEAKERS: TO BE CONFIRMED	IIHS KENGERI, BANGALORE
SAT 24 FEB 2024	4-5 PM	GUIDING CHILDREN TO MAKE CHOICES SPEAKER: TEENAZ REPORTER	 ONLINE

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 to March) and Montessori Matters (Annual Journal).

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

THE TOUCHBOARD (COLOUR; 6X8 CMS)	MONTESSORI MATTERS Black and white; (full page) 20x12 cms
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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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Roopa Sundar
Tarunya Gouthaman

Reporting Team
Aditi Ganesh | Meera Ghelani
Kavneet Chadha | Vidhya Ramalingam

Layout Design
Anju Asokan

School Connect Team
Archana Narayanan
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