

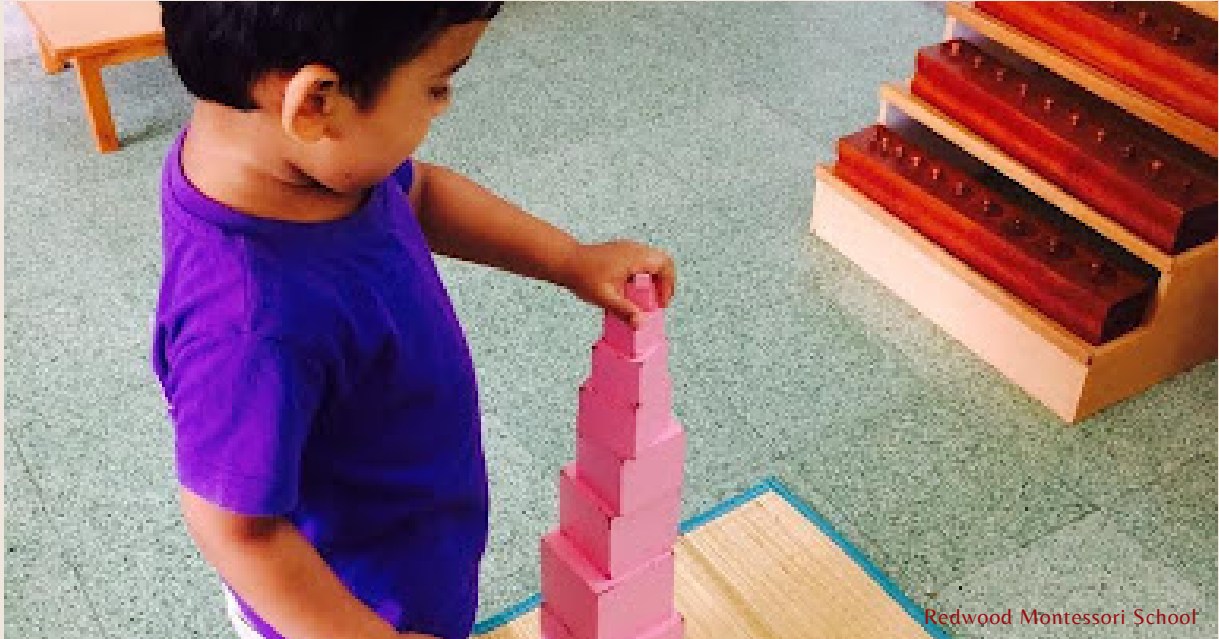


THE TOUCH BOARD



Working Hands, Building Minds

Child building a tower with cubes



Redwood Montessori School

‘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 Bold Goal Meeting with the Hyderabad Montessori Community

Team MTRT | Hyderabad

Teenaz Reporter, Director of Training for Montessori Training and Research Trust met the Montessori community of Hyderabad online on November 08, 2023 to share with them the AMI India Bold Goal for the Montessori movement in India to be achieved in the next five years. Many Montessorians participated and some who attended the strategic meet in Bangalore, shared their thoughts and reflections.



Everybody left the meeting feeling excited and enthused, promising cooperation and support to one another to fulfill the mission of reaching the bold goal set for the Montessori Movement in India.

AMI Elementary Assistants Course Adjunct

Kavneet Chadha | Bangalore

AMI launched the Assistant Course Adjunct for the alumni of Orientation courses and the Montessori Institute of Bangalore hosted the first batch of Assistant Course Adjunct (6-12 age level) from October 9 to 12, 2023. Prabha Karthik, Elementary Auxiliary Trainer, blended the course with both theoretical concepts and hands-on experience of making different types of booklets, presentations, observations of a working environment and repertoire of suitable songs. *“It was exciting to explore the idea of being an assistant in an elementary environment”*, shares Khushi Talreja, a Montessori guide from Bangalore.



“The course’s content was engaging, well-structured, and delivered in a way that made complex concepts easy to understand.” - Divya, M.S, Founder, The Child Montessori, Mysore

AMI Primary Orientation Course

Team MTRT I Hyderabad



Participants, including teachers, school assistants, parents, and soon-to-be parents, engaged in vibrant discussions linking course concepts to real-life experiences with children.

MTRT organized an online Orientation Certificate Course from October 19 to November 10, 2023, tailored for ages 3-6 years. Expressing gratitude for Montessori's ideas and pedagogy, the participants eagerly pledged to share their newfound knowledge. The course concluded with a presentation on 'Education as Aid to Life', and many attendees planned to enroll in the Assistants Course Adjunct scheduled in December. Deepthi Madiyala, highlighted the profound insights gained in Montessori pedagogy and child development. She anticipates significant growth professionally and in her journey as a parent.

Workshop - 'Literacy, Spelling, and Reading in Montessori Elementary'

Mridula Chunduri; Director, Blue Blocks I Hyderabad



Greg, known for anecdotal lectures, shared experiences from his teaching days and outlined systems ensuring strong spelling and literacy skills from Elementary to Adolescence.

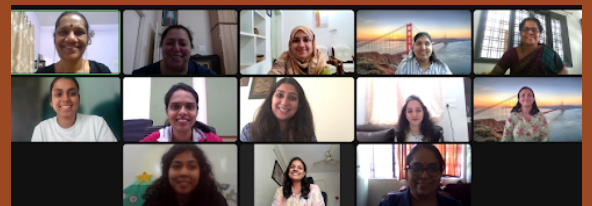
The Medha Montessori Training Institute (MMTI) in Hyderabad hosted a two-day online workshop featuring AMI Elementary Trainer Greg Macdonald on December 9 and 10, 2023. Attended by over 50 Elementary guides, the workshop provided valuable insights into effective literacy instruction. Greg discussed practical tools like learning journals, spelling dictionaries, and more, enabling attendees to develop customized literacy programs. Facilitated by MMTI's Madhavi Gaddam and her team, the workshop, supported by extensive handouts, proved beneficial for both new guides establishing elementary environments and experienced guides seeking a refresher to address daily challenges with renewed enthusiasm.

Photo courtesy - Medha Montessori

AMI Primary Assistants Course Adjunct

Team MTRT I Hyderabad

The Montessori Training and Research Trust successfully completed their Online Primary Assistants Course Adjunct in December 2023. All the participants who attended the course had completed the Online Orientation Certificate Course in November, 2023 with MTRT. The students were excited and looking forward to working as Assistants in schools.



The programme gave an opportunity to integrate the theoretical ideas and the practical components to be able to function in a Primary Montessori Environment, assisting the development needs of the children.

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Vivek High School's transformation journey: Embracing Montessori Pedagogy for Educational Excellence.

Ms. Meenu Sahi (AMI Primary & Elementary Diploma Holder)

Under the able guidance of Ms. Meenu Sahi, Head of Junior Wing, Vivek High School decided to move from the conventional educational system to the Montessori system.

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U. Elementary 8	U. Elementary 12

The educators have undergone various AMI trainings (Diploma / orientation).

Hearty Congratulations!

Kamini Kapur is now an AMI Elementary (6-12 years) Auxiliary Trainer!

She brings over eighteen years of rich experience working with children in diverse formal and informal environments. Over the last four years, she has worked with Navadisha Montessori Foundation under the guidance of Elementary Trainer Ann Dunne. Her professional experience includes serving as a National Examiner in the UK and India. She holds an AMI Diploma for Elementary and Primary age level, a Master's degree in Sociology and a Bachelor's degree in Commerce. Kamini is a passionate advocate for nature. She aims at instilling an appreciation and responsibility towards the environment among children and adults through hands-on engagement and sustainable living practices.



Primary Students on a Nature Walk - 'A Symphony of Laughter, Learning, and Leaves'

Team MTRT I Hyderabad

AMI students of the Primary course at Ratan Tata Institute went on a nature walk at Kamla Nehru Park on October 13, 2023. Guiding them through this meditative experience was Madhav Mhaskar, a retired army official turned nature devotee.

During the walk, they encountered a variety of trees that had been part of their daily surroundings, yet their true essence and medicinal properties often went unnoticed, like the neem tree. "Madhav shared insights into its medicinal properties and how their significance goes beyond providing shade. This served as a reminder that our everyday environment is teeming with hidden treasures", shared the enthusiastic students. Halting to closely inspect the trees, flowers, rocks, and leaves became more than an academic exercise; it was a spiritual recharge.



The walk was not about a destination; but about being present, one step at a time.

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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.

Body Function Material

Biology is central to cosmic education, which Dr. Montessori described as ‘the study of nature as an integrated whole, where all elements including mankind are both useful and interdependent’.[1] One of our goals for children in the elementary is to help them have a holistic picture of the world we live in, and our place in it. Therefore, we give these curious intellectual explorers “keys” that both open the door to discovery, as well as provide ways in which they can organise and categorize all that they discover.

The Body function cards and booklets are an excellent example. This material helps children study the five classes of vertebrates – fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals. They highlight defining features – such as the way in which the creatures from each of the categories cover their body (with scales/feathers/fur), what kinds of limbs they have (legs/wings/no limbs), the number of chambers in the heart, how they breathe, how they reproduce and what kind of skeletal system they have.

Using a collection of animal picture cards, children isolate all those creatures that cover their body with scales, for instance, and discover that all animals that cover their body with scales are reptiles, and have certain physiological similarities. These elementary children do not repeat the same kind of work the way younger children do, but need to have variety to keep their interest alive. This material is perfectly suited for this kind of exploration and “big” work where they can go from initially working with one class of animals at a time, then compare two, then three and eventually all five.

This simple classification exercise prepares for the scientific classification with Kingdom Animalia which is a culmination of, as well as an organisational framework for, all the zoology work that the children would have done before.

	Movement	Circulation	Respiration	Protection	Reproduction	Support
Body Functions of the Fish 1						
Body Functions of the Amphibian 1						
Body Functions of the Reptile 1						
Body Functions of the Bird 1						
Body Functions of the Mammal 1						

[1] Montessori in India 70 years, Indian Montessori Foundation, Chennai, ch2, p37

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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.

Mounika, a techie, artist and avid cook, realised the importance of aiding independence in her child from a very young age. Infact, having observed her daughter, Anika as a Toddler in a Montessori Program, she was inspired to take on the AMI Elementary Diploma. She shares how she has aided Anika's independence from an early age . Anika, now almost 3 and part of a Primary community in Bangalore, was supported on various aspects of development in the homefront.

She was given opportunities to eat independently. *"We arranged an eating table and stool for having her meals. At the age of 6 months we started giving her finger foods like boiled carrot, apple or mango. Now, she can use cutlery and eat on her own."*

For toileting, they got her a step stool, where she could comfortably sit on the potty seat by herself without fear. A chair was also provided outside the bathroom to aid her with her dressing. She is now helped only in using the faucet.



Anika naturally showed interest in cooking and was involved in multiple ways. There was lots of conversation about ingredients used and how something was made. *"Gradually I asked her to pass on the ingredients I needed as part of the cooking. She now names almost all the ingredients in the kitchen!"*

Slowly she learnt to wash vegetables and grains. She assisted in making chapatis and now makes them in parallel with her parents. *"She wants to make her own chapati and eat."* Some other ways she helps in food preparation is in making lemon juice, peeling sweetcorn, collecting herbs from the balcony for tea, cutting fruits and always winding up after. *"Gradually, she got familiar with almost everything in the kitchen. With the help of stool she can reach all the areas she needs and work on what she wants."*

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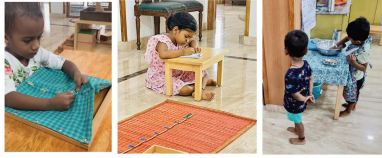
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"The child is endowed with unknown powers, which can guide us to a radiant future. If what we really want is a new world, then education must take as its aim the development of these hidden possibilities."



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Research Books - Must Haves in Elementary!

Aishwarya Janarthanan

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.

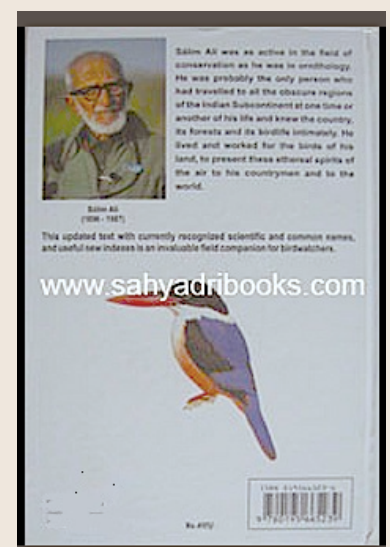
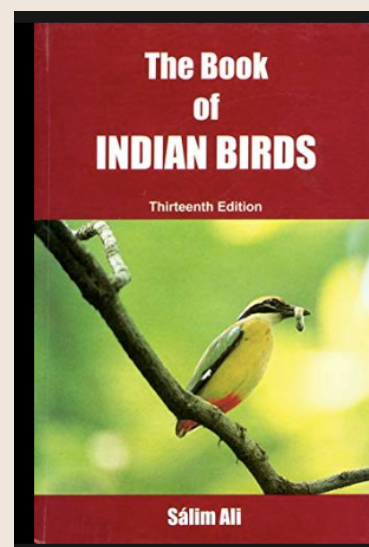
'The Book of Indian Birds' is the work of an Indian Ornithologist, Dr. Salim Ali, fondly referred to as 'Birdman of India'. It serves as a window to the world of birds. This 330 page book begins with the anatomy of a bird, after which the author dives into the different colour plates and covers quick notes about birds under each of them. There are beautiful illustrations with clear differentiation of the male and female of the birds.

Following the 64 colour plates, the author writes about each bird in detail including local names of the bird, a comparative representation of the size of the bird, field characters, distribution, habits, calls, food, and nesting of each bird. There are over 500 such birds that have been described in this fashion.

This book is a handy guide for both teachers and children alike. Beginners find the names and pictures in the book inviting. For more experienced children, it is a fantastic source for research work. Children could also use this book as reference to make their own 'Who am I' cards on birds. A group of seven year olds in my class found the language intriguing and wrote their own description of a bird for a whole week, writing a few sentences each day! It was one of their baby steps to 'big work'.

It is neither a big fat reference book nor a thin quick book on birds. It strikes a balance with its size and content. The quality of pictures gives the reader a near real-time experience of looking at a bird. The book guides the reader who is looking for a specific bird and the reader who is looking for nothing specific, alike. A young reader is sure to catch on Dr. Ali's enthusiasm for birds through this superb book!

The book costs Rs. 550 and is available on multiple online platforms. One can also pick a copy of the book from physical stores (in Chennai) such as Odyssey and Higginbotham.



Aishwarya Janarthanan has worked both as a primary and elementary guide and currently is part of the Elementary Team at Redwood Montessori School, Chennai.



CONFERENCE UPDATES

Sneak Peak into some Speakers at the Conference!
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Jagdish Krishnaswamy will examine 'Sustainable School Practices'

Jagdish Krishnaswamy is an ecohydrologist and landscape ecologist. He is the Dean of the School of Environment and Sustainability at the Indian Institute for Human Settlements, Bengaluru. He has a B.Tech in Civil Engg from Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay and a MS in Statistics and Decision Sciences and a PhD in Environment Science from Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, USA. He has worked on research, practice and teaching related to ecology, environment and sustainability for over two decades.



Tania Stewart will focus on 'Biophilia: A Natural Love for Nature'

Tania Stewart is an AMI Primary Associate Trainer whose journey in Montessori commenced in 2003 when she enrolled in the AMI Primary Diploma Course. Following her rigorous training, Tania gained valuable experience by working with children of 3 to 6 years in Mumbai. In 2018, she chose to deepen her knowledge and skills by enrolling in the AMI Training of Trainers Programme. Currently, Tania is part of the teaching faculty at the AMI Training Center in Hangzhou, China. Outside the realm of education, Tania harbors a profound interest in the natural world, with a particular fascination for animals and plants. Tania's contributions in the field of Montessori education, coupled with her environmental advocacy, demonstrate a profound dedication to nurturing the minds and futures of young learners while also protecting the world they inherit.

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Social Development and the Child of 6-12 Years



Grace Kidney, the founder of Clanmore Montessori School in Toronto, was invited to share her insights and ideas used in their school for social and emotional development in elementary children aligning with the Montessori philosophy. Grace completed her AMI training specializing in both levels - Primary and Elementary, along with a Benincasa Diploma for children with special needs. As a former President of the Canadian Association of Montessori Teachers, Grace brings a wealth of expertise to highlight the significance of addressing these needs in elementary education.

Freedom not license: Many years ago, when Clanmore Montessori School was very young, two elementary children got into the electric clothes dryer together and there was talk of starting the machine! We knew at that moment that we could not possibly anticipate the trouble the children might get into in their desire to explore. We could not create enough rules to keep them safe. They were intellectually curious, socially driven and dabbling in moral questions, all at the same time.

The nature of the child: The elementary years, we know, are a time of great intellectual, social and moral growth. With that in mind, we prepare our Montessori elementary environment for the small society of children to live and learn in it. Children share materials, space, friends and teachers; this is a busy, active, social learning space. However, in our experience, it is not enough to provide an environment, complete with community and educationally enhancing activities, for optimal social growth, a primary driver in these years. We have found it necessary to tell the children that they are growing socially and to purposefully guide them to develop good social skills. They are wonderfully intellectually curious and absorbing social information, like all other information, at great speed. The children also need some tools to deal with their social growth and the inherent challenges.

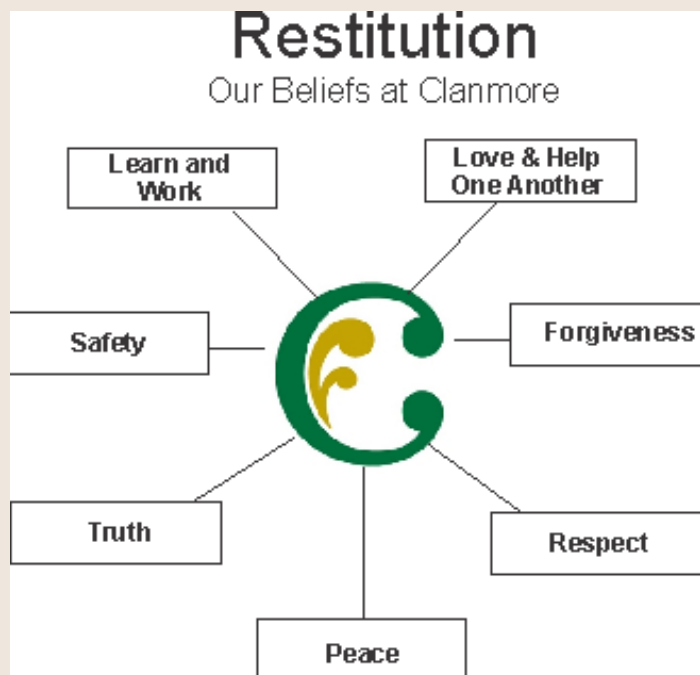
Social growth: The Theory of Restitution created by Diane Gossen is immensely helpful in the area of social growth. It has become a great partner to the myriad systems of the Montessori elementary classroom. The Restitution idea is that we “create the conditions for a person to fix their mistake and return to the group strengthened.” And we all make mistakes.

Beliefs: To begin, as with all the great lessons, we start every year with the big picture. We define how we would like things to be for ourselves, socially. We introduce the children to the idea of our “Beliefs” at school. These beliefs are largely connected with the answers to the question: What is it that makes us feel comfortable, safe, perhaps the feeling of being home? We examine that question together and consider how much of what happens at home, how much of what feels good and healthy is possible at school. We incorporate those ideas into what we call our Clanmore Beliefs. We talk about who we are, and how best to behave, always compassionately acknowledging that we are all learning and we will make mistakes.

Our psychological needs: Having outlined our Beliefs, we then move on to examine our human psychological needs in an age appropriate way. After survival, our psychological needs in the Theory of Restitution are grouped into four categories: belonging, power, freedom and fun. Everyone’s needs must be met and satisfying our needs augments our learning. At Clanmore we aim to satisfy our own psychological needs while endorsing our communal beliefs e.g. My friend and I are kind to each other therefore I have belonging. Unsatisfied needs will make a person feel unsettled and if one of us is unsettled - all of us will feel it. Children also come to understand that everything they do helps meet one of their needs. Generally this works out well.

Our mistakes: We now know who we are, what our needs are, and how we would like to conduct ourselves together in school. But we are human and all humans make mistakes. We will need to be prepared to forgive ourselves and others for those mistakes.

Fixing our mistakes: Fixing our mistakes takes both courage and self-compassion. It also involves understanding and empathy on the part of the adult involved in guiding the child or children to fix a mistake. No one likes to be found to be doing the wrong thing. It takes courage to step forward and claim a mistake as your own. And once we have acknowledged our mistake, the next step is to fix it. Sometimes acknowledging the error, out loud, with another or others, and promising to do better next time is all that can be done. But what a great step that is! If however, you’ve stolen a chocolate bar from another and eaten it, you can fix that mistake by saving up your money and getting a replacement bar for them.





The moral sense: The 6 to 12 year old loves to know moral boundaries, the right and the wrong. At the same time, 6 to 12 year olds are extraordinarily compassionate and forgiving of their own and others' mistakes. It is an ideal time to fall down in front of others and get up, think about it, dust yourself off and carry on and, at the same time, become a little stronger as a result of the experience. The teachers may lead this procedure many times before the children can fix things themselves, which is ultimately the goal.

One tool: We use a tool we call The Fab 5. We point to the fingers of an open hand starting with the thumb and remind ourselves that there is no place for: shame, blame, fault, excuses or apologies. Just fix it! We run down the little finger to the palm of our hand pointing there to the fix. Then we say, "Now an apology goes a long way towards fixing it." The recognition of the error is a declaration of having made the mistake and then a desire to fix things.

With knowledge of their psychological needs, establishment of their beliefs in school and a tool to fix mistakes the children are on the right road to helping their own social development. Life in the school is sweet and guiding the children in their learning is further enhanced.

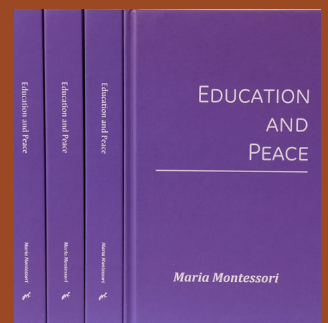


What's in the IMF store?

In the quest to bring Montessori philosophy to communities and support schools and training centres, the Indian Montessori Foundation has on sale books, didactic language material and furniture that aids independence in young children. AMI Primary Trainer Hemalatha Rangarajan shares significant quotes from Montessori books and what it can mean to a parent/teacher.

Education and Peace

"It is difficult to understand a complicated society, organised by oppressed men whose natures are distorted from the moment they are born, whose lives are condemned at their very roots. What has the child taught us? When a child lives in an atmosphere congenial to his vital needs, he proves to have character traits quite different from those we usually consider him as having. He provides living proof that mankind can change and improve from its very origin. But the world of adults must change. We must unite; we must reach out to the child, have faith in him, construct the proper climate for him and change our very selves." - Maria Montessori, Page 167, Chapter 12



In these lines Montessori emphasises the positive influence of the environment upon the child. She says if the environment supports the child's development, the child will grow into an adult who has a positive connection with society. By becoming a person who is rooted in his environment, this balanced adult will help us realise the importance of a conducive environment during childhood.

Montessori notes that unfortunately society is created by adults who are not supported during childhood. Therefore society becomes complex and unfriendly to children. There is an urgent need for all of us to come together and create a supportive environment for children. As adults we need to understand the needs of young children. Some of their needs are not visible. Many of us think that they are not capable of doing things for themselves, that we need to do it for them. This is not true. Montessori reminds adults to change themselves and have trust in the capability of children. Young children would like to do things by themselves. They want to become independent and be a part of our life. In the prepared environment such opportunities must be created. If we are able to do this, we will be able to help children in the right way. This will enable them to grow up as capable and unique individuals

All our books can be purchased at events organized by the IMF in your city or at <https://montessori-india.org/store/>. Education and Peace is priced at Rs. 560

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.

One thing that I could change about my earth

Krrish Gursahani, 6 years, Mumbai

I would like to eliminate the borders of all 191 countries and wish that the entire Earth was one big country and one big landmass with all oceans around it.

If we are one big country then travelling from Mumbai to Chicago would be domestic travel! And we would not need visas and passports to migrate to other areas.

We would also not fight wars because if we are one big country, then people from one land area can come to another land area and speak about the problem because we are one big family.

If we are one big country then all the space organizations which today are of different countries, would come and work together and achieve bigger space milestones faster. We would also be able to reach Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto faster with less hard work because everybody will do little hard work. Also, ISRO and NASA will not have to keep secrets from each other and they can share their work and research and do better things.

If we are one big country then we will have one currency and buying things will be cheaper because we will not have to pay any import or custom fees.

There will be a lot more people to come and do things for the earth together like cleaning up the garbage, helping with climate change, growing better and cleaner vegetables.

If we are one big country, people will be happier and we will have a longer and better life and we will be able to have a lot more parties than we were having before.

When we are one big country, we will not have All American Breakfast, All Indian Breakfast, All Mexican Breakfast, but it will be one big All World Breakfast!



Ferry me across the Water

Christina Rossetti

"Ferry me across the water,
Do, boatman, do."
"If you've a penny in your purse
I'll ferry you."

"I have a penny in my purse,
And my eyes are blue;
So ferry me across the water,
Do, boatman, do."

"Step into my ferry-boat,
Be they black or blue,
And for the penny in your purse
I'll ferry you."



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	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)

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

MONTESSORI MATTERS
Black and white; (full page)
20x12 cms

1 issue ₹1000

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

DONATE GENEROUSLY TO IMF!

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

FRIEND OF IMF | SILVER CARD 2 YEARS VALIDITY - ₹2000

Donor benefits: Special access to donor's section on the IMF website; 16 issues of the newsletter; 2 issues of the annual journal; Special donor pass to IMF events

FRIEND OF IMF | GOLD CARD 5 YEARS VALIDITY - ₹4500

Donor benefits: Special access to donor's section on the IMF website; 40 issues of the newsletter; 5 issues of the annual journal; Special donor pass to IMF events

 8248010258  info@montessori-india.org

The Touch Board Team

Editorial Team

Roopa Sundar
Tarunya Gouthaman

Reporting Team

Aditi Ganesh | Meera Ghelani
Kavneet Chadha | Vidhya Ramalingam

Layout Design

Anju Asokan

School Connect Team

Archana Narayanan
Jezreena Jezer | Khyati Shah

Trustees

Shirley Madhavan Kutty | Kamini Sundaram | Zarin Malva
Rukmini Ramachandran | Umashankar Kenche

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Reach the School Connect team at imfschoolconnect@gmail.com