

Editorial by Lynne Lawrence



This is a thoroughly vibrant year: in this season of sunshine and rain competing for prominence in Nature, the connections to our grass roots are deepening: more and more

people find their way to us, enter into professional relationships with us, and “seek us out” by attending EsF assemblies, refresher courses, and other events. Our Annual General Meeting and Montessori Forum in Amsterdam enjoyed an all time high attendance. It was an exceptional event, and we heard from many participants that this was a most rewarding gathering where they had gained insights, inspiration and information.

We said goodbye to three board members: Peter Davidson, Mary Caroline Parker and Maria Teresa Vidales, and we welcomed in as their successors Jennifer Davidson, Jacquie Maughan and Larry Quade. For a visual impression of the weekend,

pp. 2-12 have a lot of information and photos to offer.

If you follow us on Twitter and Facebook, you will know that we have just concluded the Fourth Assembly of Educateurs in Thailand, the first EsF venue that has travelled east, and by doing so was able to attract and serve Montessorians in countries that are currently developing a strong Montessori presence. Go to www.montessori-esf.org for updates and find more information on page 16. Of course you can also follow EsF on Twitter @AMI_EsF.

By hiring some new team members we will be able to move forward at greater speed some of our ambitious initiatives, such as the creation of the Montessori House. Meet new AMI team members in Amsterdam Nina Monfils, Fay Hendriksen, Michelle Sprenkels and Kasia Goslinksa on pp. 14-15.

Please let us know what is happening in your part of the world so that we can include interesting news from all parts of our Montessori world.

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Board Members 2015 .. outgoing and incoming



Goodbye Maria Teresa, Peter and Mary Caroline & Thank You So Much !

In April we said goodbye to three much valued members of our AMI Board, whose term of office was completed. We are tremendously grateful for the vast amount of work undertaken on behalf of AMI. Thank you, Maria Teresa Vidales (left), Peter Davidson (middle) and Mary Caroline Parker (right). We have benefited tremendously from your knowledge and commitment and cherish our Montessori friendship.



Welcome to Jennifer, Larry and Jacquie

At the Annual General Meeting three new board members were appointed: Jennifer Davidson for Child Advocacy and Outreach, Larry Quade for Pedagogy, and Jacquie Maughan as Affiliated Societies Representative. A brief introduction to their background can be found on the Board Page 3. All three will bring new expertise to the board, and we are confident they will do instrumental work in bringing the AMI vision and mission to the Montessori community.

Meet the 2015 AMI Board



Guadalupe Borbolla
Outreach & Development

Guadalupe (Mexico/Spain) has all three AMI diplomas: 0-3, 3-6 and 6-12 and is an AMI trainer at the 3-6 level. In addition, she has participated in the Adolescent Orientation Studies offered by NAMTA/AMI.

Guadalupe operates two schools in Mexico, including a Farm-School project, and a high school. She also directs courses in Mexico and Spain.

With an M.Ed. from Loyola University and degrees in Political Science and Special Education, Guadalupe is well equipped to take a broad view of all the developments in which AMI is presently engaging.



Jacquie Maughan
Affiliated Societies Representative

A member of the AMI Stewarding Council in the United States for the past two years and the Montessori Leaders Collaborative, Jacquie (USA) has just received funding from the Walton Family Foundation for the development of Montessori Birth-to-Six Family Community Centers in at-risk and underserved communities. Jacquie received her AMI primary diploma in Palo Alto, has taught at both the primary and adolescent levels, and has founded two schools, Woodland Montessori School in Spokane, Washington, and Pacific Crest in Seattle. Jacquie has served on the NAMTA Board since 1986 and has been President since 2000. In 2012 she attended the Dallas EsF Assembly.

Ian (U.K.) is a director of a real estate finance advisory firm based in London. He previously worked for Danske Bank and National Australia Bank in corporate and property lending and has extensive experience in financial services. He is interested in exploring creativity, innovation and change with his clients.

Ian has a BA in Economic History from the University of Leeds, and an MBA in Financial Services from Sheffield Hallam University.

Jennifer Davidson
Humanitarian and Child Advocacy

Jennifer (USA) is Executive Director of Montessori Northwest. She gained her AMI primary diploma from Montessori Northwest and a Master's in Education from Loyola University.

She chaired the Steering Committee for the 27th International Montessori Congress in Portland, and has presented at national Montessori conferences in the US, Australia, Mexico and Japan.

Jennifer currently serves as the AMI representative to the MACTE board and is a member of the Montessori Leaders Collaborative.



Philip O'Brien
President

Philip (Ireland) is currently Senior Adviser at the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric Aids Foundation.

He was previously Executive Vice President for Communications Advocacy and Development at the Foundation. Prior to joining Elizabeth Glaser, Philip worked for UNICEF in a number of positions and roles, including as Regional Director for Central and Eastern Europe, and Director of Private Partnerships and Fundraising.

Philip has lived and worked in Asia, Africa, US and Europe. He holds a Master of Science in Economics from the University of Wales, Swansea UK.



Henk Franken
Funds Development



Henk (Netherlands) is founding director (2009) of Th Raincoat Consultancy, specialised in public/private sector partnership brokering, strategy development and capacity building.

Henk was Chief Executive Officer UNICEF The Netherlands from 1999 to 2009. He also served as Director of Corporate Planning Monitoring and Evaluation/Program Quality at PLAN International, HQ England, which organisation he also served in South America, Kenya, and Zimbabwe.

Henk graduated with honours in Sociology from Groningen University.



Larry Quade
Pedagogy

Larry (USA) has been a teacher at both the primary and adolescent levels, a pedagogy advisor and Head of School, and is currently the Director of Training for the primary academic course at Montessori Institute of North Texas. He holds a PhD in Anthropology from Kansas University, was a tenured Associate Professor of Anthropology at Washburn University of Topeka, and is an affiliate member of the Clinical Faculty of Education at Loyola University Maryland Graduate School.

Larry worked closely with AMI and the Montessori-Pierson Publishing Company on editing Maria Montessori's 1913 Rome Lectures.



Ian Stockdale
Honorary Treasurer

Board in Session



Impressions of the Board Meeting of Thursday April 9, held in the building adjacent to the AMI office, to be developed into our international hub where knowledge, research, and Montessori connections will all come together to meet and learn.

Board Reception at Industrieele Groote Club

Late afternoon on Friday 10 April: participants of the weekend, from some 35 countries, from all continents, raise their glasses, catch up on each others' news, forge new friendships ... in anticipation of the AGM and Forum weekend, starting on Saturday 11 April. In the photos we see Montessorians from China, Ireland, Norway, Mexico, Switzerland, Morocco, and the USA.



11 April: Affiliated Societies Meeting

The five newly affiliated societies opened the meeting by giving a short presentation on their background and hopes.



Switzerland's President Philippa Romig explained that Association Montessori Switzerland was created in 2012 in co-presidency with Karin Truttman. She pointed out that the new organisation brings together the country's four major languages, ensuring that all parts of Switzerland are represented.

On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of AMS (2012) the decision was taken to bring all Swiss groups under one "umbrella" organisation. The Swiss had just

seen culmination of these efforts by signing an affiliation agreement with AMI the day before. AMS is committed to expanding the Montessori movement in Switzerland, and one of the activities by which these endeavours are supported is the active promotion of AMI training at various levels, and encouraging assistant courses.

The society works very closely with Montessori teachers and looks forward to growing and strengthening the Montessori presence in the Swiss school landscape.

Aidi Chen spoke on behalf of the new Chinese Montessori Affiliated Society—The Montessori Institute of Child Development. Mrs Chen has many years of experience in education as principal of the Wulinmen school in Hangzhou. She explained that the China Montessori Institute is a non-profit organisation, whose mission is to encourage and promote social science around education. Registered with the local government,

the objective of the institute is to work closely with AMI, to promote Montessori education and explore the efficacy of Montessori education in China. The organisation hopes fervently that more children will be able to benefit from Montessori education. China has more than 230 million children in the age range 0-14. Such numbers present an opportunity and a challenge. As Montessori "enthusiasts", they want to mobilise all resources and unite the movement to carry out their mission and move forward as one. Mrs Chen is committed to serving children, and thus serve society and humanity.





Demberel Dashdorj introduced the Mongolia group to her new global Montessori colleagues, and explained that her interest in Montessori education was sparked when she researched what type of education might be available for her young son. With a modest population of 3 million, Montessori is

very new to Mongolia; the “oldest” school is only ten years young. The new society is very glad of their affiliation to AMI which will help support their efforts to spread knowledge in their country and promote the establishment of more Montessori environments. The group looks forward to the work ahead and hopes to be able to report growing acceptance and understanding of Montessori in the following years. ●

Dr Namfa Benjalug spoke on behalf of the Thai association, mentioning that she looked forward to another inspirational gathering with colleagues she had been meeting these past five years. The societies’ meeting and the rest of the weekend events would present opportunities for new



exchanges, and a platform to share the exciting programme for the Educateurs sans Frontières (EsF) Assembly in Thailand this summer. She invited her colleagues to be part of the EsF experience and travel to Thailand. The Thai group has been very active for a number of years, and they were delighted that formal affiliation documents with AMI had been signed, which they feel will be an endorsement and support of their endeavours. ●

Christian Schjetnan spoke on behalf of the [Mexican Affiliated Society](#), sharing the plans and the new initiative led by SAMAC to support [Montessori training in Latin America](#). A special meeting was held as part of the larger Mexican Montessori Congress,

As former Board member with special responsibility for affiliates, [Peter Davidson](#) spoke on [Leadership for change](#), pointing out that for big ideas to be received well, leaders should be effective by finding common values, goals and hopes and



which traditionally is organised in February. During that event the AMI Mexican trainers provided a great deal of background information on their activities to their colleagues from Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador and Guatemala, pledging support to the Latin American countries that are keen to strengthen Montessori presence and aspire to offer AMI courses. There is a vast potential in the Spanish speaking countries for Montessori, and Lynne Lawrence stressed the importance of combining existing resources to help these efforts.



logo AMI Montessori South America

AMI is also, together with the Montessori-Pierson Publishing Company, endeavouring to have as many Spanish Montessori titles in print as possible.

aspirations to share, whilst acknowledging that change can be hard. He stressed that change truly is a constant and natural phenomenon. Without it, people and organisations could not grow. Peter recognised that at this stage there were many affiliates that had to anticipate, and capitalise on change and he elaborated on the diagram of Managing Complex

Change, a model developed by education professor Tim Knoster. According to Knoster, the non-negotiable components of vision, consensus, skills, incentives, resources and action plans are necessary for successful change to occur.



Peter encouraged his colleagues to keep on communicating the Montessori vision through each and every channel available, and to manage complex changes effectively, both with consideration and appreciation of the history, but not lacking in determination.

[Bonnie Beste](#), Executive Director of AMI USA, elucidated on the [Montessori Public Policy Initiative](#). She explained that in the political constellation of the USA, with its various state legislations, it is important to impact governments by acting on the need for state based advocacy coalitions. She stressed that Montessori requires strength in advocacy to ensure its place as the standard of high quality, research-based and developmentally sound education for all children. In short, there is much work today in lobbying government and creating a true understanding of human development as embraced and promoted by Montessorians. In the US there is hot discussion on quality rating improvement systems, assessment and standardised testing—which invites Montessori elementary educators to find a language and way of reporting that is seen to be aligned to Early Childhood Education regulations. Bonnie is positive about current developments and the cooperation with other advocacy partners, such as the American Montessori Society.

[Christine Harrison](#), Australia, gave the meeting an insightful presentation into establishing fruitful contacts in government and how effective relationships can be built. She shared some of the successes realised in Australia, where through committed workgroups and detailed documents the Montessori curriculum was recognised at country level. By becoming a serious partner at the table, the visibility of Montessori is also raised at different “fora” where the educational discourse takes place.

[Stephanie Miller](#) from Trust for Learning (TFL) reinforced this message when she reported on the progress TFL have made over the past years in gaining access to “that seat at the table”. Governments are increasingly convinced of the importance of early childhood but are seeking models that have a proven track record of providing quality. It is one of the objectives of TFL to “educate” government to recognise the invaluable contribution of Montessori. TFL sees its role as a builder of unity and capacity, creating a central strategy and funding support. The US White House Summit on early education in December 2014 brought together policy makers, school superintendents, corporate and community leaders, and others to talk about the importance of quality early childhood education. A 350 million dollar investment in high quality early education was pledged.

In closing, Philip O’Brien stressed that the world needs to be aware of the prevailing urgencies in education; we still have to reach more than 100 million children and help them gain access to education. He also emphasised that gender equality in education remains high on the agenda. Countering a disadvantaged start in life remains a challenge that Montessorians need to rise to.

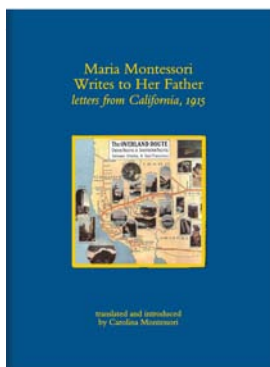
11 April: Annual General Meeting

Besides the “traditional” business aspects of AMI’s Annual General Meeting there were three highly personal highlights, the first being the launch of a new publication from the Maria Montessori Archives: Carolina Montessori had translated and introduced a selection of letters Maria Montessori wrote home to her father back in Rome while she was



in California in 1915.

The first copy of this English language boutique publication was presented via a live Skype connection to Mrs Grazia Honegger Fresco, who has taught, lectured and published on Montessori education (including a biography of Montessori). Mrs Honegger is a passionate champion of Montessori—and as such she was a most deserving “recipient” of the first copy. The photo shows Grazia Honegger on screen, with Carolina Montessori thanking Mario Valle for accepting a copy of the book on Mrs Honegger’s behalf.



There were two major work anniversaries to be spotlighted: Barbara Millington celebrated 25 years of work at AMI. As course

administrator, she holds a central position in the office, being the main point of contact for our trainers and training centres, and guiding new groups aspiring to full AMI courses. She was presented with a special certificate of appreciation for her outstanding service to AMI, and in her thank-you speech, Barbara shared her enthusiasm for AMI’s growth and new initiatives.

Lucie Meijer celebrated 23 years of service to AMI, as secretary to the Board, financial administrator and buildings manager. Having



worked with the greatest of pleasure and commitment a few years “beyond” her official retirement age, she felt now was the time for a new generation, and decided to leave this summer. Lynne Lawrence thanked her for her loyalty, generosity and utter dedication towards AMI over the years, and presented her with a special gift.

Keynote Speakers on 11 April



David Laws and David Connolly each gave presentations on the origins and significance of conflict, and human work towards resolving differences resulting from social divides, armed conflicts, warring interests or no to little access to means for addressing problems.

Dr David Laws is a senior lecturer in the Department of Political Science at the University of Amsterdam. Before coming to Amsterdam, he worked at the Department of Urban Studies and Planning and the Sloan School of Management at MIT and with the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School. He is Co-Director of the Amsterdam Centre for Conflict Studies and a founder of the Public Mediation Program at the University of Amsterdam. His research focuses on the relationship between negotiation and conflict resolution, public administration, and democratic governance.

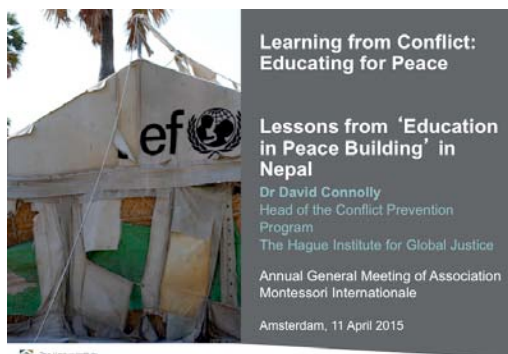


Dr David Connolly is Head of the Conflict Prevention Program at The Hague Institute for Global Justice. He is formerly a research fellow and lecturer at the Post-war Reconstruction and Development Unit, University of York, 2005-2013. At York, he was Director and co-founder of the

MSc program in International Humanitarian Affairs, and Deputy Director of the Education in Conflict and Emergencies research program. Dr Connolly trained as a Political Scientist and specialises in the institutions and processes of local governance during and after conflict. His interest spans the various roles that communities play in social, political and economic recovery, conflict resolution and early warning.

The presentations by the two “Davids” proved to be excellently complementary, with Dr Laws kicking off the keynote by zooming in on how citizens’ protests in conflict situations can be instrumental in obtaining clarity, further transparency and democracy. He discussed the importance of a network for learning, and how conflict both demands and creates a context for learning.

David Connolly spoke on the role of education in peace building,



explaining the mission and work of the newly established Global

Institute for Social Justice and the role they are hoping to fulfill in the world. The scope of their work was illustrated by a very sincere and enlightening story on a Nepalese initiative to have the role of education examined in the reduction of violence. David’s remark that for education to attain results, it has to interact with politics was both an endorsement and an eyeopener to us — educators with a peace mission — that we have to be firmly grounded in reality.

Learning develops through efforts rooted in local experience that bring conflict into focus



DE UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM UvA

12 April Montessori Forum

World Reconstruction: Remembering the Forgotten Citizens

The theme of the Montessori Forum on Sunday 12 April was “World Reconstruction: Remembering the Forgotten Citizens”.

“The Forgotten Citizen” is a term coined by Maria Montessori to refer to the child when advocating their rights in society. On this occasion, the notion of the Forgotten Citizen was extended to include various populations that are underserved or at risk. The presentations that took this theme on board covered a great variety of initiatives.

The day opened with a presentation by [Deza Nguembock](#). Born in Cameroon, she moved to Paris in the 1990s needing medical care for after-effects of polio that she caught at the age of four. She is the founding director of E&H LAB, a communications and consulting agency specialised in Corporate Social Responsibilities based in Paris, France. She created the Aesthetics & Disability concept. In 2008, she joined the planning strategic and consulting division of a design company in Paris. She decided to stop her contract in 2011 to start her own business, E&H LAB, dedicated to CSR. She showed the Forum participants how through her work and campaigns she raises awareness and makes sure that companies care about humans mainly through art projects: well-being at work, group cohesion. Her subjects are minority groups (disabled employees, seniors, women at work).



AMI trainers [Molly O'Shaughnessy](#) and [Connie Black](#) addressed the theme by speaking on “The Forgotten Citizen: Montessori Partners Serving All Children” — a presentation which gave an inspirational insight into the initiatives of Montessori Partners Serving all Children (St. Paul, USA), which has embraced working with children in underserved populations (including Hmong and Native Americans). <http://www.montessoricentermn.org/montessori-partners/montessori-partners-serving-all-children/>

[David Kahn](#) gave an update on the very special and exciting work that is being done with Montessori adolescents. He focused on “Montessori Proof Point: The Adolescent Becoming Adult”.

Sport is a valuable tool with significant power and potential to facilitate social and economic development, and is about more than competition: sport is a means of inclusion, a means of levelling the social playing field: sport is for everyone. Former athlete [Ruben Jongkind](#) spoke on how he works with adolescents in a top sports environment and his work with Ajax Football Club,



Amsterdam. He expanded on programmes that are currently being developed, where the pressures of excelling at sport are married to healthy development of the whole person, and where he and his team take inspiration from Montessori principles.

[Jacquie Maughan](#) encouraged the day's participants to promote the Cycle In Nature initiative in their own local and national communities. The goal of Cycle in Nature is to raise money for worthwhile causes by having adolescents cycle special tracks. In 2017 we are hoping that groups of adolescents will cycle to Prague, where the 28th International Montessori Congress will be held. cyclesinnature.org

Speakers [Michelle Bourgeois](#), [Jennifer Brush](#), [Gail Elliot](#) and [Anne Kelly](#) are part of AMI's newly established AMI Montessori Advisory Group for Ageing and Dementia (MAGAD) and delivered a presentation on their work (see page 13 for an introduction to these four group members). MAGAD is developing a Montessori programme to support the aged and people suffering from dementia. For videos on work and care with a Montessori approach you may like to go to <http://www.massa.org.au/videos>

The day closed with a witty and breezy round-up by [Steve Hughes](#) on current developments in Montessori research.

Elderly, Dementia and Montessori

The AMI Montessori Advisory Group for Ageing and Dementia (MAGAD) has recently been established. Four of its members, Michelle Bourgeois, Jennifer Brush, Gail Elliot and Anne Kelly (from left to right in photo) delivered fascinating presentations on their work and mission to the participants of the Montessori Forum on Sunday 12 April.

Other members of MAGAD are AMI trainers Annette Haines (USA) and Pamela Nunn (Australia). Keep up to date with MAGAD developments via <http://massa.org.au/montessori-dementia>



Michelle Bourgeois is a Professor in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, University of South Florida. She has received numerous grants from the National Institute on Aging (NIA) and the Alzheimer's Association to investigate interventions for spousal and nursing home caregivers designed to improve the quality and quantity of communicative interactions with residents with dementia, to evaluate memory aids and interventions for persons with dementia and traumatic brain injury, and to develop training programmes for institutional caregivers. A clinical researcher, Dr Bourgeois has published numerous research articles, training manuals and CDs, and books. She was the recipient of the 2007 Barry Reisberg Award for Non-Pharmacologic Research, Theory, and Clinical Practice and a 2013 Erskine Fellowship at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand.

Jennifer A. Brush, M.A., CCC/SLP has been working for over 20 years to change the face of dementia care in long term care. She is an internationally published speech-language pathologist known for her work in the areas of memory, swallowing, and environmental interventions for people with dementia. She has served as the Principal Investigator on applied research grants that have examined issues pertaining to HIV/AIDS dementia, hearing impairment, dining, dysphagia, and the long-term care environment. Jennifer is the primary author of three books: *I Care: A Handbook for Care Partners of People with Dementia*; *Environment and Communication Assessment Toolkit™*; and *A Therapy Technique for Improving Memory: Spaced Retrieval*. Jennifer is also the author of *Meal Time Matters*, a training programme that builds nursing assistants' and home caregivers' skills related to dining, swallowing disorders, and safe feeding assistance.

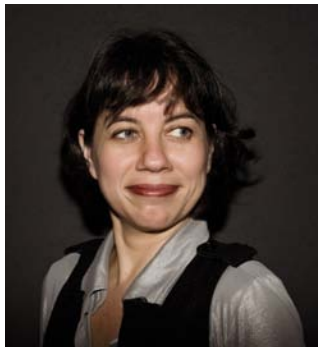
Gail Elliot is Gerontologist & Dementia specialist and the Founder and CEO of Dementiability Enterprises Inc. She retired from McMaster University, Ontario, Canada, in 2012 with the purpose of focusing on dementia education. She is passionate about changing the face of dementia, and dementia care. Over the past 30 years she has gained the reputation as a leading expert in the field of aging, with a focus on interventions for dementia. She has worked in academic settings and in the community. In her role as an educator she has delivered workshops, presented at conferences and taught at the college and university level on a variety of topics in the field of aging both locally, nationally and internationally. Gail is the author of a number of publications, including *Montessori Methods for Dementia™: Focusing on the Person and the Prepared Environment* (2011).

Anne Kelly is a Montessori Dementia Consultant who also holds qualifications in Post Graduate Dementia Management, Assessment & Workplace training and Dementia Care Mapping. She has worked extensively in dementia care both residential and community for the past 30 years. She was recently the Director of Montessori for Dementia™ Australia. In 2007 after completing a train the trainer programme, she received her credentialing in both Montessori Based Activities for people living with dementia and Spaced Retrieval from the Meyers Research Institute in Ohio. In 2009 she was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to further study Montessori methods for Dementia Care which enabled her to travel to Canada and the USA to work alongside world experts in this area including, Dr Cameron Camp, Professor Michelle Bourgeois and Gail Elliott. Since her return from overseas Anne has been sharing the magic of Montessori for Dementia™. She has joined the Montessori Australia Foundation to spearhead the Montessori Aged Support Services division.

New AMI Colleagues in Amsterdam

Nina Monfils

Office & Event Management and Funds Development



In January Nina Monfils joined AMI to follow in “some” of the footsteps of Lucie Meijer, who retired this summer.

Nina is secretary to the AMI

board, and Lynne Lawrence’s personal assistant.

She is responsible for office management and fundraising for the Maria Montessori House, which initiative will benefit greatly from her experience in publicity, styling and branding.

Trained at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, majoring in Textiles, Nina’s career has involved many aspects of styling and branding, while working on styling and editing teams attached to highly visible and influential Dutch magazines.

Prior to working for AMI, Nina held a similar position at the Dutch National Cancer Institute, Amsterdam.

Her styling career still plays a part in her life, as she teaches at Artemis Styling Academy, where she hopes she can inspire next year’s students by sharing the campaign for the Maria Montessori House.

Nina can be reached at nina.monfils@montessori-ami.org
Linkedin: <https://www.linkedin.com/pub/nina-monfils/11/85/5a2>

Fay Hendriksen

Educateurs sans Frontières coordinator

Fay Hendriksen joined the AMI team in February.

She has first hand knowledge of Montessori, having graduated from a Montessori high school herself, and is delighted that she can match international outreach work with a Montessori approach.

Fay studied International Relations and obtained a Master’s in Conflict Resolution. After finishing her Master’s, she spent four months in Nicaragua as a volunteer in a school project, which experience made her increasingly aware of the importance of quality education in order

to bring about independent, socially conscious individuals.

The time in Nicaragua also showed her the

potential of education in effecting social change and empowering communities.

Fay’s responsibilities include coordination of Educateurs sans Frontières activities, and she has just enjoyed her first Assembly in Thailand. She is also assisting with Funds Development.

Fay can be contacted at info@amiesf.org

Linkedin: <https://www.linkedin.com/pub/fay-hendriksen/71/b6a/246>



Colleagues continued

Michelle Sprenkels Affiliated Societies coordinator

Michelle has been working for AMI as part of a work experience placement related to her studies at



Nyenrode New Business School, Netherlands, from which institute she hopes to earn her Bachelor in Business Administration.

Her interest in how international organisations operate and their networks can be grown is leading in her further thesis work, and her responsibilities at AMI fit her like a glove.

Michelle is coordinator Affiliated Societies, a first point of contact for groups pursuing affiliation to AMI.

She is also database coordinator for AMI's Amsterdam membership administration.

Michelle can be contacted at office@montessori-ami.org

Linkedin:
<https://www.linkedin.com/pub/michelle-sprenkels/65/861/613>

Kasia Goslinska Assistant course administrator

Kasia joined AMI last year to assist with course administration.



She is responsible for the database maintenance of all documents related to the administration of AMI courses worldwide. She processes requests from AMI graduates for course transcripts and diploma statements. She also assists in the preparation of all official examination papers.

Kasia has several years experience working as an administrator for a law office.

She has a degree in literature and journalism from the university of her native city of Szczecin in Poland.

She moved to the Netherlands a few years ago.

She enjoys reading, cycling and working out under the expert guidance of one of her Amsterdam colleagues.

Kasia can be contacted at admin@montessori-ami.org



FOURTH ASSEMBLY

Educateurs sans Frontières

Thailand

2-16 August, 2015



Just completed

The Fourth Assembly on:
Montessori Education for Social Change
Sustainable Initiatives — Innovative Solutions

More details to be forthcoming, but in the meantime you might like to go to the new website of

Educateurs sans Frontières. www.montessori-esf.org

or follow the tweets: https://twitter.com/AMI_EsF and visit the EsF Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1413176458978902/>



Impressions from the Educateurs sans Frontières Assembly in Thailand



The "tree" that, each evening, gathered all thoughts and "pearls" of the day by the EsF participants



News from the Training Group

CONGRATULATIONS

The Training Group is delighted to congratulate three new trainers and two new auxiliary trainers, who will help strengthen our training corps and our courses, present and future. Well done, and all best wishes for their

work go to: Teenaz Reporter (India), Trainer at the Primary (Casa dei Bambini) Level
Jamie Rue (USA), Trainer at the Elementary (6-12) Level
Tayabba Saleem (Pakistan), Trainer at the Primary (Casa dei Bambini) Level
Sara Brady (Australia), Auxiliary Trainer at the 0-3 Level
Gerard Leonard (USA), Auxiliary Trainer at the Elementary (6-12) Level



Teenaz



Jamie



Tayabba



Sara



Gerard

FOURTH PRIMARY SEMINAR IN HYDERABAD

To create greater accessibility to the Seminar Format of the Training of Trainers Programme, a new step was taken in 2013: to host the next group of trainees in the programme in India. The Training Group have been most appreciative of the support of Dr Naik of the Hyderabad Montessori Training and Research Trust, and her Board, who have been instrumental in facilitating the Seminar, in terms of accommodation and study rooms. The fourth (out of six) seminar sessions concluded on 22 May, and the trainees returned to their “ordinary” lives to continue studies and writing assignments, until the next gathering early December.

During this time in Hyderabad, the group were happy to visit Pragnya Montessori School, which caters for children from 30 months to 12 years. Thanks to the school’s principal, Mr Kumar, we can share a few visual impressions here.



School bus arriving with Seminar participants



In one of the classrooms, with Lynne Lawrence, who led this Seminar together with Rukmini Ramachandran

Tending the Light

John R Snyder

John Snyder is a former AMI elementary teacher, school administrator and a great writer on Montessori, writing with clarity, passion and brilliance; the conception and realisation of his book *Tending the Light* is truly exceptional, and we are reproducing here part of the Preface.

It is immensely gratifying, very humbling, and a little miraculous to me that this book, so long in my imagination, has, with the help of so many friends and colleagues, finally come into being. Although I wrote steadily and widely during my career as a Montessori guide and administrator, I always thought of collecting and publishing these writings as a project for my retirement years. And so it is, although I never intended to retire so young. In the spring of 2011, during my second year as a school administrator, I was diagnosed with ALS, a progressive disease that gradually disconnects all of the muscles of the body from the control centers in the brain. With the help and understanding of my school community and equipment provided by the state of Texas, I was able to keep working until the summer of 2013.

When my Montessori friends learned that I was interested in publishing a book, a number of them stepped forward with offers of help. Leaders of AMI-affiliated societies in the US, including David

Kahn and Jacquie Maughan of NAMTA, Chris Trostel and John Hooper of the AMI Elementary Alumni Association, Bonnie Beste and Adam Lewis of AMI/USA, and Sue Pritzker of the Montessori

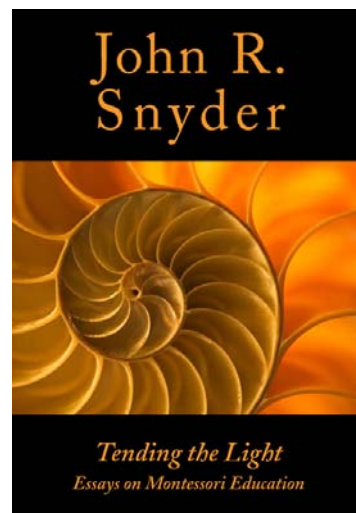
Administrators Association worked with their boards and networks to fund the production of the book.

(...) I think Maria Montessori would be thrilled, as I am, with the technological advances that have allowed me to compile and edit the book: Dragon Dictate dictation software that transcribes my spoken words and recognizes my editing commands, and a TrackerPro head mouse that tracks my head movements to provide the functionality of a mouse or trackpad.

(...) The debts, great and small, that I owe my community are beyond reckoning. I am particularly grateful to my trainers Elizabeth Hall, Janet McDonnell, Dr Kay Baker, and Greg MacDonald for sharing their profound understanding of Montessori education and setting a very high bar for my practice. The opinions expressed here, including the mistaken ones, are strictly my own.

John R. Snyder

ordinarypersonslife.com



order via jsnyder@pobox.com
more info on http://ordinarypersonslife.com/?page_id=56

Special Publication for Harald Ludwig

Seventy-five is an excellent number, especially when your name is Harald Ludwig! Professor Harald Ludwig's recent 75th birthday not only "flags up" his wisdom and vast knowledge of Montessori, it also testifies to his unstoppable energies and commitment to his Magnum Opus: the completion of the Academic Series of Maria Montessori's collected writings in German.

A selection of friends and colleagues helped in the creation of a special commemorative publication, entitled *Fragen an Maria Montessori, Immer noch ihrer Zeit voraus?* [Questions to Maria Montessori, still ahead of her time?]

The publication was presented to Harald at a surprise gathering in his natural habitat, "The University of Münster", where he was the driving force of the Montessori Centre until his retirement a few years ago. In line with Harald's character, the celebration was modest and intimate — but some glasses of sparkling wine were raised in the greatest of friendships to Harald's health.



Congratulations, Harald.

Thank you for your immeasurable contributions to Montessori academia, and our AMI family.



Christa Ludwig, right to Harald is enjoying the surprise party for her husband.

The publishers, Herder Verlag, also distribute this commemorative book via their webshop http://www.herder.de/suche/exp/details?k_tnr=32875&sort=1&query_start=&titel=Fragen%20an%20Maria%20Montessori

More Books, published by MPPC

After having been out of print for many years, [The Mass Explained to Children](#) has been published afresh by the Montessori-Pierson Publishing Company. This book presents the beauty, depth, and simplicity of

the traditional Latin Mass, helping to make it easily understandable for any and every child. With acute sensitivity to the purity and clarity of a child's mind and soul, Maria Montessori instructs in how to prepare for Mass, explains how the altar is set up, and clarifies the meaning and use of the sacred vessels and other elements used during Mass. She describes also the role of the priest, the use and symbolism of vestments, and much more. Then she proceeds to demonstrate the order of the Mass as it slowly unfolds in

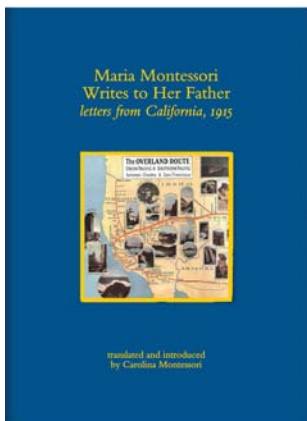


Chalice being filled with wine and a little water

word and gesture. <http://montessori-pierson.com>

A new gem in the MPPC portfolio is

Maria Montessori Writes Home to her Father, letters from California, 1915.



In 1913 Maria Montessori travelled to America for the first time, a hugely successful visit leading to an even greater interest in her educational ideas. In the following year, her American supporters urged her to return to conduct training courses, which were in great demand. To celebrate the formidable technical achievement of constructing the Panama Canal, two simultaneous expositions had been organised: The Panama Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco and The Panama-California Exposition in San Diego. Montessori was invited to give training courses and direct demonstration classes at both fairs. In August 1915, the famous Glass Class was opened at The San Francisco Expo. She had hesitated to accept these invitations, as it meant leaving behind in Rome her 82-year old father, Alessandro Montessori, who was in a frail condition. The letters in this volume, written to her father during the eight months spent in California in 1915, are testimony to Montessori's great quality as an observer. Her keen eye to detail combined with her colourful descriptions reveal a spontaneous personality, delighted by what she saw and experienced; they equally show how loving and concerned a daughter Montessori was.

MPPC are also engaged in (re)publishing [Montessori titles in Spanish](#), as their availability had dropped to an undesirably low level. MPPC are taking advantage of the occasion to have those titles reviewed in order to correct inaccuracies in old editions. Currently the titles below can be ordered.



Meet an AMI Member

Who are the other members of AMI? This series brings you mini portraits of some of your fellow Montessorians around the world. We hope you will connect to their commitment.

Name?

Evelyn Greenberg

Country?

USA

Profession/Montessori work?

At the United Nations, New York, I am AMI's main representative, where I am forging relations with other NGOs, especially those servicing the young and their families. There are currently 1300 NGOs associated with the Department of Public Information at the UN. I consult regularly with Victoria Barrès who is my AMI counterpart at UNESCO.

Partner, children?

I live with my husband Bert, a scientist. Years ago when Bert worked for Phillips, we would occasionally combine our trips to Holland. At Stevens Institute of Technology you will find him still working with students in the crystallography field. Our daughter, Elisabeth, has been working in the New York City Council as a senior journalist and event planner.

Hobbies, leisure activities?

A love of nature is one of the guiding elements in our lives, as well as a deep interest in all things musical and artistic. We have travelled widely often renting local homes or apartments. I always loved visiting Montessori schools and everywhere looked for materials that could be used for language, practical life or geography.

Why and when did you join AMI?

I joined AMI in the early 1970s; it did not take me long to commit totally by taking out a Life Membership. It was an honour and delight to meet wise and fun-loving Mario and Ada, insightful Mario Junior and life-embracing Margot Waltuch (actually one of my predecessors at the UN).

How did you get introduced to Montessori?

While a music major at LaGuardia High School of Music and the Arts in New York, I bought a used copy of E.M. Standing's biography of Maria Montessori for ten cents. It was not an easy book to read, yet I was immediately engaged and knew that not only would I fulfill my dreams of becoming a teacher but I would be guided by Montessori. My college in New York encouraged future teachers not to major in Education but rather pursue a broader base of knowledge. I studied the fine arts, psychology, anthropology and geology while also taking the courses required to certify as a public school elementary school teacher.

Why did you continue your interest ?

The open classroom concept used in many British infant schools had been brought to New York by Lillian Weber. I was fortunate to be able to travel to London and visit the Gordon Brock Infant School where I observed the programmes first hand. To create my own comparative education programme I visited Pestalozzi schools in Switzerland, A. S. Neill's Summerhill in Saxmundham, England and Montessori Schools in Italy. After much thought I realised that open classrooms would work better in the US if children had prior Montessori preschool experiences. It did not take long to make the jump to be trained by Lakshmi Kripalani as an AMI directress.

What other organisations do you support as a member?

Currently I chair the Bergen County Children's Advisory Board, which helps provide access to early childhood programmes for financially challenged families, and assist in settling disputed cases.

What do you find most inspirational about Montessori?

May I quote my husband, who expressed wonder when he first saw me calmly facilitating a classroom of what to him seemed like a hundred little children busily going about their individual and small group activities. Our children Elisabeth and Ben came to class with me weeks after their births and are a commentary on my life's work.

Favourite Montessori quote

"Little children, from the moment they are weaned, are making their way towards independence."

Favourite educational book/website

I peruse many world-wide university sites for Montessori history and research. In addition, I find university sites helpful in related fields such as psychology.

Is there a question we have not asked? Yes, you should have asked why I visit so many libraries and bookstores? It gives me the opportunity to ask for books by Dr Montessori. If they are not available I ask that they be ordered. In some situations, such as college libraries, I donate books by and about Maria Montessori. I follow up in making sure that the books have indeed been processed and are accessible.



New Societies Sign

With so many international participants around during the AGM weekend, we were able to plan a number of official signings of our new affiliated societies that had completed the affiliation process. Share the special moments with China, Mongolia, Switzerland, Thailand and Tunisia.



Mrs Aidi Chen has just signed an affiliation agreement for China with AMI. To her left are Philip O'Brien, (AMI President), Lynne Lawrence (AMI Executive Director) and André Roberfroid, now Global Ambassador



Tsolmon Namkhainyam and Demberel Dashdorj from the Association of Mongolian Montessori Teachers have just signed an affiliation agreement.

Second row left: Susan Stephenson who helped prepare the ground with her visit to Mongolia, Michelle Sprenkels and Megan Tyne, AMI liaisons for AMI affiliated societies, together with Philip O'Brien, Lynne Lawrence and André Roberfroid.

New Societies Sign



The two Swiss Montessori societies, representing two major language streams in the country (French speaking, and German speaking) have now formally signed to operate as one society.

On the left, Philippa Romig for the French section. Karin Truttmann, who signed on behalf of the German section, is missing from this photo.

Next to Philippa: Corine Devanthery, Philip O'Brien, Megan Tyne, Michelle Sprenkels and Lynne Lawrence

Thailand have been preparing to form an affiliated society for a number of years, and April saw the culmination of all the seeds that have germinated.

Signing for Thailand is Kannekar Butt, with Niramol Tojinda, a government official, standing to her left. Also seated is Somrak Kidech. The ceremony is greatly enjoyed by government advisor Dr Namfa Benjalug, standing behind Kannekar.

Cherdsak Srisa-ngachai, Educational Service Area Director, is watching the signing procedure standing behind Philip O'Brien, and next to André Roberfroid.



New Societies Sign



Ferid Chouikhi (second left at the table) has just signed the affiliation agreement with AMI on behalf of Association Montessori Afrique du Nord.

On Ferid's left Monique Baudet, who helped prepare the ground for this big step.

AMI representatives in this photo: André Roberfroid, Philip O'Brien, Megan Tyne, Michelle Sprenkels and Lynne Lawrence.

French Society Celebrates 65

Retirement at 65? Not an age at which Association Montessori de France AMF is likely to take things easier. On the contrary, they are starting out on a second lease of commitment to the future. Many congratulations to AMF from AMI and your fellow associated societies! Best of luck for your work during 2015 and many

more years to come. And we wish you an excellent day on 28 November when you will celebrate with the French Montessori Community.



65 ans !

« Quelle valeur peut avoir la transmission de la connaissance, si la formation de l'homme est négligée ? Il existe, ignorée, une entité psychique, une personnalité sociale, immense de par la multitude de ses individus, une puissance dans le monde qui doit être prise en considération ; si aide et salut peuvent venir, ils ne viendront que de l'enfant, puisque l'enfant est le constructeur de l'homme. »

Le petit enfant est doué de pouvoirs inconnus, qui peuvent guider vers un avenir lumineux. Si l'on veut arriver à une reconstruction, c'est le développement du potentiel humain qui doit être le but de l'éducation. »

Maria Montessori

Assistants Course: Chongqing China

Our trainer Madlena Ulrich (back row, middle) has shared a group photo of the very first AMI Children's House assistants' course in Chongqing, which has just concluded.

The photo shows the participants (no less than forty) plus staff from the Chongqing Beautiful Grassland Montessori Training School, which had organised the course. We are excited that we can extend the AMI presence in China also by offering assistants' courses, a vital and important tool to draw in both educators and parents.



Assistants Course: Papeete Tahiti

The course was held in Papeete, the capital of Tahiti, over two weeks. Fifteen students interested in learning more about Montessori and pursuing their interests further, came from Tahiti and the neighbouring island of Moorea to attend the intense Assistant programme, conducted by Irene Fafalios in French over a period of consecutive days from 8.30 to 4.30 p.m.



The course was organised by Karine Buchin and Vaea Esposito, both dedicated and committed to establishing quality Montessori in Tahiti. Over the last few months, they had been busy setting up the Association Montessori Tahiti, which intends to run training courses, and support teachers and schools in Tahiti and the surrounding islands. Tahiti can boast two Montessori classes, running for more than ten years, both of which graciously

accepted to take on the 15 students on the CHAC course as observers, in order to complete the requirements of their Assistant training course.

Association Montessori Tahiti has its headquarters in Papeete, with a small training centre. They are gradually purchasing all the appropriate materials needed in order to run a full time 3-6 diploma course. The classes were held every morning on the waterfront. Students would arrive, many with fragrant flowers decorating their hair, others with wreaths of flowers, always smiling, always cheerful, always welcoming. The standard of the course was high, with a greatly interested group of young teachers, most of whom had been working in the state sector for many years, whilst others had been working with children for more than 20 years. They were therefore able to recognise immediately the benefits that come with Montessori education. The students showed a good understanding, a great sense of humour and great appreciation of what they were learning. The end of the course was marked by a student who danced a very beautiful Tahitian dance whilst singing a song about peace which deeply touched the entire group. It was a moving closing ceremony and the students left, all wishing to continue their studies and pursue further this interest in an education which they felt was right for their country and their community of young children.

Montessori in the South seas is just beginning and will surely take firm root, since the people are determined to give it their all and do what it takes to provide a full diploma course, so as to enable their children to have access to quality education which will improve their lives and strengthen their culture.

Assistants Course: Mumbai

In April, the Ratan Tata Institute of Montessori Training conducted an Assistants Course at L'école Montessori, Mumbai. Thirteen students from a broad spectrum of backgrounds attended: mothers, teachers, therapists, even someone with a career in banking took part.

The foundation of Montessori principles was laid through enthralling lectures delivered by Suneeta Madhani and Neelima Mhaskar. Students also enjoyed hands-on material making experiences by preparing a poetry anthology and classified pictures. The feedback received testifies to the fact that an Assistants Course can lead to the beginning of a transformation on how childhood can be regarded and approached.

Feedback from some of the course participants:

'These days together have enriched us all. We have learnt so much and many of us felt that the course was too short. There has been a major shift within us all, as we are all able to improve our understanding of the child's world and hope to practise our knowledge with our children — be it as teachers or parents or in some cases grandparents.'



'You had me at hello. This is just a small token to say "thank you" from my inner self. This course helped me gain knowledge, understanding, love, good rapport and humour. Yes I am on my journey and today I don't know where I shall be tomorrow ... as perhaps I need to transform and construct a self able to love, trust and care, understand and aid. What is going on in those tender hearts who come to us with so much hope and faith. I pray that I may aid them develop to their fullest potential.'



'We have had a great time as your delivery of the theory and practicals was done with passion, (for your job and children) sincerity, patience and fun. Thank you so much.'

Aid to Life

2012 saw the launch of the Aid to Life website — a great resource website for parents and caregivers, which has a host of tips and background on the development of babies and toddlers.

The Aid to Life Initiative is based on the idea that children develop optimally when they are brought up in an environment that supports their natural development, with an adult who understands how to connect them to positive activity and then allows them enough time to grow and develop according to their own pace and rhythm. aidtolife.org aims to give parents clear, simple, straightforward advice in a format that is easy to understand and apply. Supportive materials, such as a video pack and booklets can be purchased additionally.

Parents know how to find the website, and we are grateful for their positive feedback. Occasionally they will also contact us with questions, to get clarification or reassurance.

The website is currently also available in the following languages:

Chinese: <http://aidtolife.org/zh>

Greek: <http://aidtolife.org/el>

Romanian: <http://aidtolife.org/ro>

Russian: <http://aidtolife.org/ru>

Spanish: <http://aidtolife.org/el>

Vietnamese: <http://aidtolife.org/vn>

To purchase DVDs and booklets visit
<http://montessori-namta.org/Aid-toLife-Initiative>
 All income from sales is spent on further development of
 this great resource site.



Mișcarea

Mișcarea pune copilul în contact cu mediul său. Copilul învață prin intermediul simțurilor. Mișcându-se, atingând, miroșind, văzând și ascultând, el începe să își înțeleagă lumea. Atunci când poate explora și interacționa cu împrejurimile, copilul învață. Mișcărilor și explorărilor sale îi conectează corpul și creierul. Ce poți face pentru a susține dezvoltarea armonioasă a mișcărilor copilului tău?

Îi poți încuraja dezvoltarea optimă atunci când un
medic îți cheamă:



- 1 Pregătește mediul
- 2 Oferă-i ocazia să se miște
- 3 Acordă-i timp pentru mișcare

Pregătind mediul, oferindu-i ocazia de a se mișca și acordându-i timp, îi poți ajuta pe copiii tăi să crească stăpân pe sine. Atunci când alegi să nu folosești echipament care îți constrânge și îți restricționează mișcările, ei se simt impinși pentru că atinge prin propriile eforturi praguri de dezvoltare a abilităților motorii. Fiecare sucursă și abilitate nouă îi pregătește pentru noua etapă, pe măsură ce mușchii devin mai puternici iar circuitele creierului se coordonează. Timpul pe care îl accorzi înțelegerea noilor de repetiție și exercițiu vor hrăni

Ajută-mă să mă mișc singur.
 Află mai multe pe site-ul www.ciddlife.org



Αυτοπειθαρχία

[illegible]

Μην κρίνετε την ανάπτυξη του στο κομμάτι της αυτοσυνειδήσεως, ακολουθώντας τις παρακάτω τρεις βασικές αρχές:

- 1 Δημιουργήστε ένα περιβάλλον που ευνοεί την αυτοπειθαρχία.
- 2 Φέρτε το παιδί σας σε επαφή με το περιβάλλον.
- 3 Δώστε χρόνο στο παιδί σας και σεβαστείτε τη δραστηριότητά του.

[illegible]

Βοήθησέ με να είμαι κύριος του εαυτού μου

Ενισχύσεις για τη ζωή

沟通

从出生那一刻开始，婴儿几只会吸收他的词汇。也会吸收他在说话时的语气、音调和语言结构。他通过自身所听到的事物构造出他自己的说话方式。起初，他只会通过肢体语言和哭进行沟通。但是随着他渐渐长大，将会从他的嘴里蹦出词汇。可这些词汇的丰富程度不随性别而他在生命前几年内在周遭所听到的那些词汇一样。身为家长，值由遵循以下几

- 1 为良好的沟通预备一个环境。这意味着要预备好您自己以及其他家庭成员，因为您就是孩子的语言环境
- 2 通过说、听和读将孩子不环境连接起来
- 3 提供孩子时间去吸收您的词论不练习说话

孩子的谎言基础在其生命的前几年得以奠定。作为家长，您在这个独一无二的机会窗口对谎言发展的主控将会改变孩子的发展。

帮助我自己来进行交流
登录www.aidsinfo.org了解更多详情



Независимость

Независимость – это способность самостоятельно думать и действовать. Ваш ребенок становится независимым благодаря самостоятельной работе. Чем больше ребенок делает сам? Будучи активным в повседневной жизни, ребенок начинает понимать правила, свою роль в семье, свои обязанности. Предоставляя выбор в нужное время и в противовес руке помощи тогда, когда ребенку действительно необходима эта помощь. Вы словно говорите ему: «Я знаю, что ты можешь сделать это сам!» Так малыши получают новые навыки и установку «Я могу это сделать», обретают уверенность, которые ему пригодятся в дальнейшей жизни.

На пути к независимости Вашего ребенка соблюдайте три основных принципа:

- 1 Создайте доступную среду
- 2 Покажите ребенку повседневные дела, в которых он может участвовать
- 3 Найдите время для Ваших занятий

Следует иметь в виду, что Вы направляете ребенка на путь независимости. Наберитесь терпения и помните, пока Ваш ребенок будет самостоятельно не умеет сидеть. При выполнении упражнений старайтесь избегать **вынужденной** деятельности на протяжении 1-2 месяцев и медленно показывать ребенку, что и как Вы делаете, чтобы он мог идти по своему пути во время. Замедлите деятельность: спокойное расписание это может показаться непростой задачей. Конечно, пора бы начать приступить к работе ребенка самостоятельно, самим ходить и исследовать, играть игрушками, видеть, слушать, что не кричать, когда ребенок садится или встает. Но когда это время придет, давайте возможность ребенку потренироваться в том, что он только что выучил, и он будет очень рад. Ваш ребенок Вас удивит. Вы будете счастливы, когда увидите, как он будет двигаться.

Помоги мне сделать это самому.



Помощь жизни

The Prepared Environment

for Child and Adult

Bulbul Hasan

Bulbul Hasan is a 2006 graduate from the Casa dei Bambini Course at Navadisha, Chennai. When she wrote this reflection, she was working in a beautiful Montessori project for children from low income and indigenous backgrounds in a small rural town in the mountains of northwest Mexico. In this article she reflects on thoughts and feelings that pervade her just before the start of a new school year, and her love of the mindfulness Montessori offers.

The past days, with the beginning of a new school year around the corner, have been full of preparation mostly of the environment and a beautiful planning of our calendar to see how we'd like to see our year unfold. Preparing the environment always brings to focus the important, the beautiful, and the necessary. It always asks of us to be precise, to exercise our aesthetic sense, to hold always so perfectly that inner and outer beauty, to be mindful about the carefully chosen objects and materials we are placing in the environment. This mindfulness in the preparing of the environment helps us envision not just how we want the space designed but also how the care and the placing of each object adds meaning to the way in which it will be used.

And this preparation is precious and satisfying and makes us share with each other and the children our love for the space and the materials – a precious fossil here, a painting to look at while waiting to use the bathroom, a tiny brush to clean the corners of the Movable Alphabet box, a flower in a vase, and the list could go on. But in preparing of this environment shelf by shelf and corner by corner, my mind keeps wandering back to the preparation of the adult. To quote Montessori from *The Absorbent Mind*, 'We have to watch ourselves most carefully. The real preparation for education is a study of one's self. The training of the teacher who is to help life is something far more than a learning of ideas. It includes the training of character; it is a preparation of the spirit.'

Watching and studying myself, working with my own spirit, is work that goes on unconsciously when I am with the children; this on-going preparation connects me to different aspects of my life where I am invited to work on these aspects with thought and precision. Preparing myself helps me be prepared for the children in a sense that my wellbeing results in theirs. To be in one's centre, calls for a certain care. Sometimes, I notice that this care could be physical – a good night's sleep, a big breakfast; at times it could be emotional – being able to have successfully expressed a strong emotion; at times it could be spiritual – a ten-minute silence practised just before the children enter; at times it could be in the form of inspiration – having read an insightful article the previous day. This helps me be prepared for my work for the day, to be the interpreter of the child, to observe without judgement, to respond to present needs, to be careful to discriminate my actions from my reactions, to set myself at the pace of the child, to be wholly present to the

needs of each child while at the same time to the needs of the group,

Is it possible then I ask myself to always bring freshness to each day – like when the water in the pouring water jars get murky and we change the water, or when the books in the library have been enjoyed and revisited many a day and we change them, how instantly the attention freshens when a new soap is placed in the washing hands material. How do we as adults find that freshness to replenish our work day in and day out. Well, I think that part of the work lies in our preparation and part of it lies in the way the environment is structured. A Montessori environment gives everyone present an opportunity to build community, by being respectful not to just our own needs, but also to the needs of others.



To exercise kindness and show empathy.

Empathy and building community are not abstract values in a Montessori environment. They are practised every day as opportunities arise for both adults and children. Empathy is what enables the adult to see what it is the child really needs and helps foster strong firmness when required. The repetition in exercising these values for both children and the adults brings about over a period of time a way of being that is intrinsically thoughtful, enabling us to place the needs of the community before our own, kind, joyful, loving, present and mindful. Mindfulness is interwoven also into so many aspects of the work in the environment. Always in our presentations we are asking ourselves and showing the child that our actions and our thoughts are united. When we invite the child to participate in a presentation, we have observed his/her readiness for it – we have prepared ourselves to offer it to the child. We make sure it is available and ready to use on the shelf. We walk with the child, guiding to take in our careful movements. It is a brief unison of our time that we are grateful for. In the handling of the objects we are precise. In the very sharing of what we want to offer we exude thoughtfulness, passion, joy and love for the material and its purpose. We are always modelling the behaviour, the feelings, the calmness, the care, the patience, the precision, we expect of the child and in doing so we are not just preparing ourselves to be better equipped for our work but we are also cultivating an environment of peaceful harmony in our inner and outer lives.

Back Page



PEN FRIENDS

Sonia Dreolini works at a young elementary Montessori school in Udine, Italy. “Her” children, as part of their cosmic work, have recently enjoyed corresponding with a Montessori school in Japan. They are keen to broaden their horizon yet once more by corresponding with a Montessori school in Ethiopia, especially as one of the children has their roots in that country. Can any of our readership help broker contact?

Please email Sonia at:
sonia.dreolini@alice.it

Need or want to contact us?

General queries:	info@montessori-ami.org
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