



e-bulletin

January 2013 President's Letter on Freedom, Mutual Respect and Solidarity



Dear Friends,

As always it is a great pleasure to send you, your families, and especially your children, my very best wishes for a great new year. And for various reasons the pleasure is even greater than usual, as we delight in many new rewarding developments.

To begin with, our community is growing: not only do we grow in absolute numbers, but we are also making promising inroads into new continents. New Montessorians are joining us from Asia, Latin America, and from Africa where new avenues are being explored to draw on Montessori education as an instrument for lasting development.

We can also report that the trend of an increasing interest in Montessori as noted these past two years continues and grows, with requests for information and new training courses coming in from all over the world.

Clearly the time is right!

We have to meet the challenge of spreading Montessori values as never before. This means that we need to mobilize our energies, resources and capacities and focus on three main areas.

Legacy

AMI has a unique role as custodian of the history of the Montessori movement, maintaining the integrity of Maria Montessori's legacy. In this role AMI is responsible for articulating Montessori philosophy and practice clearly in order to meet the needs of children and influence educational paradigms in a rapidly **changing world**.

Comprehensive research strategy is necessary, not only to provide evidence of the validity of the Montessori approach, but also to continue the roots and tradition of Montessori as a scientific method. We must be able to demonstrate that Montessori education is a proven method from birth to 18, and not just a sophisticated kindergarten movement, as still erroneously perceived by too many people.

Capacity

We need to increase our capacity: we need many new Montessori teachers. That means opening new courses and centres in all interested countries, whilst optimizing the recruitment of trainees in existing centres.

We need to find imaginative ways to give more young people access to Montessori education, and that means finding ways to introduce Montessori teacher training programmes into public teacher training institutions. Success will lead to additional research on the substance of Montessori.

Increasing capacity also means strengthening our advocacy for quality Montessori education. It means stepping up our connections and collaboration with our affiliated societies, so that the Montessori voice can be heard across society.

Increasing capacity is also reaching parents. They are at the grass roots of spreading the word that Montessori works, seeing in their children the champions of independence, discovery, empathy and collaboration as they live it naturally, without having to theorize about it.



Outreach / Partners

AMI strives to promote the rights of the child throughout the world, irrespective of race, religion, political and social beliefs, in cooperation with other bodies and organizations that further the development of education, human rights, and peace.

We recognize that there are many other groups of educators and organizations that share the fundamental values of Montessori. If we want to strike the “Montessori iron” now that it is hot, we can only do so when we work together through positive and respectful dialogue in an effort to make progress.

In 2012 significant efforts have been undertaken around the world and here I would like to salute the people who have contributed to these initiatives.

Similarly, we need to realize that the global education discourse is in dire need of Montessori knowledge. Whilst Montessori involvement is crucial, Montessorians too often are not at the forefront of these developments. Education is a subject close to everyone’s hearts, with large numbers of conferences, meetings and public discussions taking place all over the world. We are grateful that education reform is high on the agenda, but must stress that Montessorians have to make their unique voice heard and champion the Montessori child. We have work to do!

Peace and leadership

Finally we need to acknowledge the fact that the world in which we live and work has changed and will change even further. Our children will grow up in a world where leadership is found and required at multiple levels. We must prepare our children for this new world and help them become leaders of a peaceful and progressive society. The values promoted by the Montessori philosophy are precisely what our children need.

Our children are encouraged to understand and practise freedom. They develop the capacity to make their own decisions based on a true observation of the environment, with confidence and self-respect. They grow into strong individuals.

A Montessori environment is driven by mutual respect and values all differences, whether they be in age, gender, opinion or religion, as opportunities to learn and gain from interpersonal exchanges. In other words, our children grow as strong members of human society. Our children discover in a natural fashion that individual freedom and mutual respect are essential in



human society. They do realize that a peaceful society requires the true practice of solidarity and they learn how to organize it.

Future, close by and further afield...

The New Year presents a golden opportunity to start a new chapter in the Montessori movement. The Montessori Congress under the auspices of AMI this summer in Portland, Oregon will gather participants from many countries and various organizations. Teachers, parents, opinion leaders and international educators will participate and inspire. I do believe that a worldwide campaign can be initiated in Portland in order to touch the lives of many more children.

To contribute to the making of a world driven by freedom, mutual respect and solidarity, that is my wish for 2013 to all of you, and indeed to all the children of the world.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Roberfroid'.

André Roberfroid
President
Association Montessori Internationale

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