



e-bulletin



January 2014 President's Letter on new challenges and a call to action

Dear Friends, Greetings!

As usual it is with great pleasure that I send you my best wishes for a happy and fruitful new year. However, this year's pleasure comes with mixed feelings. Since I announced my retirement as your president last November, this is the last time that I may send you such a message in that capacity. Needless to say that I am overcome by feelings of mild melancholy in so doing.

Past and Future

But this is not the time to turn back and meditate on the past. On the contrary, this is *the* time to look ahead. And our future is filled with hope! As I said in my opening speech at the Congress in Portland, Montessori is alive and well; Montessori is growing in numbers and influence; Montessori is expanding—new activities are being undertaken, we address a larger public; we embrace recent scientific discoveries, particularly in the field of neuroscience, and these give renewed energy to research programmes, leading to continuous improvements and greater understanding.

Being full of hope is not synonymous with being able to lean back and wait for the future to happen. It means that we are eager to welcome demanding challenges. For current growth to be lasting and sustainable our key notions are: more funding, effective management and a strategic vision that is permanently reassessed and globally shared.

Growth

As we grow in numbers and activities, it is obvious that we need more resources. Currently our financial house is in good order, having grown significantly over the last few years, both in terms

of income and assets. But, if we want to support our growing community, it is essential that we are able to continue this trend.

Our office in Amsterdam is serving an increasing number of training centres, supporting more and more individuals, groups and affiliated societies in many new countries. Our efforts to bring Montessori to the global debate that addresses the world's educational crisis have resulted in many requests to participate in conferences and symposiums. While we have always been skilful at advocating for Montessori education, we now need to hone our skills to promote Montessori on the international stage. We have always known our core business of how to establish a training centre, but we are now asked to participate in the transformation of national education systems. This is already happening in Thailand, Australia, China and Vietnam.

So far, under the able leadership of Lynne Lawrence, the team supporting our work has done incredible work to face such formidable challenges. I want to take this opportunity to express my admiration for what has been achieved by such a small, talented and

dedicated group. But success comes at a price. Not only shall we need to increase our staff capacity, we will also need to decentralize some of our operations in order to better serve the countries that are counting on us.

More and more of our affiliated organisations, training centres and each of our members will be offered the opportunity to play a concrete role in the delivery of our services. While this is a challenge for all of you, I know that many are not only ready for it, but have been expecting it for the last few years.



Strategic Plan

The implementation of our vision is guided by a strategic plan that is regularly revised and improved. Our new role as an active participant in the transformation of the education community has added to our responsibilities. Our vision now includes partnerships with governments, exchanges with educationalists, discussions with other Montessorians, dialogues with universities. Our strategic approach goes beyond protecting and developing Montessori: it includes promoting Montessori education while respecting differences and dialoguing with knowledgeability and gusto.

Recently, the role of Montessori as an agent for social change has been reaffirmed. Many new initiatives offering good quality Montessori education to children in difficult circumstances have recently started and demonstrate again and again that Montessori can work perfectly in the poorest of environments. This part of our movement, known as “Educatours sans Frontières”, is vibrant and ambitious. Created by Renilde Montessori some fifteen years ago, it is the living proof that AMI remains loyal to the social message of Maria Montessori.

Embracing Challenges

Friends, although we have every reason to be proud of what Montessori has achieved, we have to embrace the challenge of what remains to be done. In our world nothing is easy: the stakes are high. We, all Montessorians, can make a difference. We can help our children to make a difference in their and our world.

Having met so many of you, I know that you, as a group, are perfectly equipped for the task. As of next April I will join your collective, happy to offer my contribution, feeling certain that our combined talents and determination will eventually improve our children's future.

Soon our Board will select my successor. I am confident it will be a person with a clear vision, with high ambitions for the welfare and well being of children, but modest enough to realize that our goal requires the contribution of all people of good will, of all those who believe that children are capable of doing so much better than we, if appropriately guided and supported. I am sure it will be a person whose priority is to *serve*; a person that you all deserve.

Happy New Year to all of you and thank you for having given me the best ten years of my life.



André Roberfroid
President
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