

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

AMI USA

Events & Activities

2016 Refresher Course and Workshops

The annual Refresher Course and Workshops were held this February in Long Beach, California. The Refresher Course continues to be the largest gathering of AMI teachers, administrators, parents, and assistants in the United States. This year, 989 attendees participated in the weekend, with an additional 125 attending the concurrent NAMTA Adolescent Workshop.

With a theme of Beyond the Pink Tower, AMI/USA sought to use this year's Refresher Course to remind participants that the work we do goes far beyond the materials on the shelves. With workshops on relationship building, inclusive education, bilingual education, Montessori Public Sector practice, and Montessori public policy, among others, this theme was in clear evidence. This year's Keynote Address was delivered by Dr Travis Wright, who gave a remarkable talk on childhood trauma, and how we work with children in these challenging circumstances. As the weekend continued, our trainers provided meaningful ways for Montessori educators to strengthen their environments and deepen their practice.

The Refresher Course concluded on Monday with none other than AMI's own Lynne Lawrence, sharing the work of the *Educateurs sans Frontières* and challenging all to work beyond the borders of our classrooms. Next year we will reconvene in Austin, Texas, for what promises to be another fantastic weekend of education and camaraderie!

Publications & Media

The AMI/USA Bookstore, hosted on the AMI/USA website, offers a wide range of Dr Montessori's writings and supplementary material written by AMI trainers and administrators. The offerings have now been expanded, with several of Dr Montessori's titles now available in Spanish. AMI/USA is also working to ensure that a variety of supporting books are available, as well as souvenir merchandise such as pins and note cards. Proceeds from several of the titles AMI/USA offers contribute directly to the Margaret E Stephenson Fund, supporting AMI teacher training in the United States.

The *AMI/USA Journal* is distributed to members two-three times each year, providing current insights and articles from AMI trainers and parent pages to help member schools involve families in learning more about Montessori principles and practices. Some highlights from this past year's journals include articles on class size, technology in the Montessori environment, and cultural revitalization. In keeping with environmental practices, the AMI/USA Journal will be moving entirely to a digital format in its next issue.

The Assistants to Infancy section of Montessori Guide (www.montessoriguide.org) was launched last spring, to great acclaim. The A to I section as well as all the different

levels, offers videos, articles, and writings from Dr Montessori about children throughout the planes of development. The entire website is a valuable resource for parents, teachers, and Montessori advocates, especially as it is used for on-going training of Montessori principles.

Memberships

AMI/USA membership has increased in the past year by 8%, resulting in a total of 3,255 individual members. AMI/USA's School Recognition Programme has held steady this year, as several long time schools closed their doors this fall. The disappointment of these closures was softened by the arrival of new AMI schools. We were thrilled to welcome St. Francis Montessori, Barron Area Montessori, Montessori St. Clair, Pioneer Meadows Montessori, and Enfield Montessori to the AMI family this year. Approximately 200 schools in more than 35 states receive AMI recognition, and we field regular inquiries from schools interested in joining in the 2016-17 school year.

AMI School Recognition and Consultations

As previously reported, the AMI/USA School Recognition and Consultation programme has undergone tremendous growth in recent years. This year, 124 consultation visits are underway, with a corps of 43 AMI consultants and trainers completing these visits. As the Consultation programme has grown, it has become necessary to train new consultants. In May 2015, 22 teachers and administrators undertook a 5-day training to become AMI consultants at the primary and elementary level. This year these Consultants-in-Training have been writing three pedagogy papers and completing apprentice visits in order to join the consultants already in the field. We have already been able to welcome four AMI trainers to the pool of consultants, with Guadalupe Borbolla, Naoko Ogawa, Uma Ramani, and Jamie Rue completing the requirements to become consultants. We look forward to welcoming even more in the next year.

Special Projects & Outreach

The Montessori Public Policy Initiative (MPPI)

The Montessori Public Policy Initiative is a joint partnership between AMI/USA and the American Montessori Society (AMS), to monitor and help safeguard the legislative and regulatory environments for Montessori programmes across the US. MPPI is in an exciting period right now as we recently held the first-ever MPPI State Network Advocacy Retreat last Fall, to bring together the policy and advocacy representatives from each state to learn more from national and state policy makers, as well as from the successes and challenges of other state representatives. In addition, we also received a planning grant from the Walton Family Foundation to engage in and complete a strategic plan for how to grow and sustain this initiative. The MPPI Council is working with an outsourced consultant to guide this process, and we hope to have a completed strategic plan for submission in May, with the ultimate goal of procuring more funding for an implementation grant to take this work into the next 5 years.

Montessori Leaders Collaborative (MLC)

The MLC is comprised of Montessori leaders in the US who convene regularly to discuss each organizations' work, as well as examine how collaborative efforts and projects can be undertaken in an effort to both raise the visibility of Montessori in the United States, as well as to increase access to more children and families. Many exciting projects have come from the collaborative work of these Montessori leaders, convened with the financial support of the Trust for Learning, including growth of the MPPI as discussed above, and Access Montessori (www.accessmontessori.org), a new resource for communities to establish Montessori birth-to-six family community centers. This May, we will convene in Minnesota to further explore how the MLC might work together on enhancing and improving professional development opportunities and experiences for Montessori educators, leaders, parents, and staff.

Board & Committees

AMI/USA Board members Roger Ochs and Adam Lewis will be ending their terms this summer. Their contributions have been invaluable and their investment in the important work of AMI/USA is much appreciated. The Board has elected Zack Nauth and Durkin Ledyard as our newest board members to replace Adam and Roger. Both bring an appreciation for Montessori education and expertise in the fields of business, finances and law. The new Board members will serve as observers at the March and July Board meetings before assuming their official memberships in August 1, 2016.

Strategic Planning

This July, the AMI/USA board will be engaging in strategic planning in San Francisco. With recent transitions in leadership and board membership, this is the perfect time to reflect on our mission and to think strategically about our short term and long term goals. As a part of this strategic planning process, we will be polling our membership through a combination of surveys and interviews as a means to integrate their feedback into our process

Bonnie Beste
Executive Director