

UNITED KINGDOM

Montessori Society AMI (UK)

Events and Activities

Our AGM in July last year was organised around the topic of Practical Life. Mrs Lori Woellhaf (AMI 0-3, 3-6 and 6-12) shared with our members her wealth of practical insight into children and in meeting their developmental needs on a day-to-day basis. Her talk was entitled 'Montessori Essentials: Understanding Practical Life'.

This year our annual seminar was held all day on Saturday 4 March. We had the pleasure of welcoming both Dr Steven Hughes and Mrs Elina Rautasalo to conduct a workshop of 'Children and Testing Culture: Communicating with Parents, Employing Alternative Measures, and Holding True to our Values'. Part history lesson, part group strategy session and part review of Montessori philosophy and values, our attendees gained a clearer understanding and greater awareness of the highly topical and contentious area of testing children within schools in the UK and of strategies to put in motion as parents, teachers, practitioners of all levels and researchers. Our annual seminar aims to attract both Montessori practitioners (be it parents and teachers) in addition to the wider public through choosing topics that are of relevance to everyone concerned with children and their development.

Special Projects and Outreach

We seek ways in which we can give a platform for worthwhile charitable projects. Our membership base and reputation, allow us to share the incredible work of others who tirelessly spend their free time helping those who are less fortunate. We consistently work towards the common aim of creating an environment and setting conditions that help individuals and their community to help themselves, always for the good of humanity.

Collaborations and Partnerships

We are delighted to be continuing our sponsorship agreement with Nienhuis this year and to continually find ways in which our relationship can be expanded and thus improved. As with many professional collaborations, we look forward to striking a balance that, on the one hand, gives us the resources to be able to widen our scope of activities, and on the other hand, will not infringe upon our core Montessori values. We are always open and eager to hear about other possible collaborations and/or partnership opportunities.

Publications and Media

Our website is in the process of a makeover as we move operating platforms to a more sophisticated memberships-driven system. The new system has allowed us to tailor to our members and membership needs more closely and to communicate to the Montessori and wider community more easily and effectively. We will continue prioritising our work on updating our IT capabilities and functionality over the foreseeable future.

‘How soft are ‘Soft Skills’?’ was the title of issue 13 of our publication, *Direction* published last summer. Featuring articles on Soft Skills by Peter Davidson, Punishment by Donna Bryant Goertz, and Positive Language by Alicia Eaton among others, the issue truly encapsulated what Montessori is all about. To quote our editor, Louise Livingston, ‘It is true that Gayle Wood writes about Mathematics but almost everything else is about how both parents and teachers can help children to develop what is known as soft skills – those habits and attitudes that will help them to succeed in all aspects of their life...’ and she continues, ‘Although why they are called soft skills I am not sure, because there is nothing soft about their effect on people’s lives.’

We aim to produce two publications per year featuring topical subjects relevant to Montessori teachers and parents, from birth to adolescence. We have our regular contributors and specially featured articles, which are all reviewed by our editor Louise Livingston, an AMI 3-6 teacher trainer, based at the Maria Montessori Institute in London. Circulation for each issue is presently 500 copies.

Memberships

As at October 2016, total full membership count came to 349 (a slight increase since March). Our UK individual memberships stood at 107 (an increase from 98 in March). There are also four group memberships, which make up the remainder of the total memberships number.

Board & Committees

- Vice Presidents Elizabeth Hood, Hilla Patell and Muriel Dwyer
- Chairman Emma Wong Singh
- Treasurer Wanda Robins
- General Purposes Com. Michelle Bernard, Diana Bradley, India Brown, Maria Contomichalos, Marie Leconte, Jane Luetkens, Joanna Morfey and Michele Siegler
- The GPC is made up entirely of AMI diploma holders, of which some are currently practicing and others non-practicing teachers, and some who are parents of children who have attended AMI-run Montessori Schools.

Emma Wong Singh
Chair