



25th International Montessori Congress
Champion the Cause of all Children

Congress Feedback

Matty van Drempt, Congress Coordinating Committee

Sydney Convention Centre – Darling Harbour – Sydney, 14 – 17 July 2005

During these days the Congress was held here in Sydney, organized by members of the Australian Montessori Community under the auspices of the AAAA - [Australian AMI Alumni Association] and AMTEF – [Australian Montessori Teacher Education Foundation]
CHAMPION THE CAUSE OF ALL CHILDREN – was its title and was also its aim.

Since 2001, in the lead up to this Congress, it was held to be of paramount importance that the Congress was not just another ‘talk fest’ but a call to action to everyone to make the child’s life better, whatever their circumstances. The program structure looked at:

The Essence of Education
The Essence of Service
The Essential Mandate

Having lived through two World Wars, Dr. Montessori’s life and work was devoted to Humanity and the ability for us to live together in peace. She realized that this can only be achieved through the ‘New Man’ – The Child. Her philosophy and education methods went hand in hand and this gave great emphasis for her to be perceived as an educator, however her intention was always for it to also be a social movement.

This being the 25th Congress and on the eve of the Montessori Centenary, it seemed timely to reinvigorate these objectives.

Dr. Montessori was nominated and received many Peace Prizes during her lifetime and the AMI [Association Montessori Internationale] has been an NGO to UNICEF for many years now. Many Montessori teachers have gone to different countries, i.e. Romania and other countries in the former eastern block, countries in Africa, Asia and South America to work, assist and provide advice for helping children in many diverse situations.

At the end of the 1990’s Educateurs sans Frontiers has been an initiative by Renilde Montessori, Dr Montessori’s granddaughter. This encourages Montessori practitioners to work outside the classrooms and provide and establish better conditions for the child with whatever resources are available, applying the Montessori principles.

Initiatives taken over the last few years by the Congress Committee have seen great advancement in cooperation with the indigenous communities here in Australia.

The College has been able to sponsor 5 Indigenous teachers for teacher training. It supports projects in Cape York through close cooperation with the Northern Queensland Education Department, as well as an Inner City/Redfern Montessori Education project.

Over the last few years we’ve seen many of our teachers go overseas as well to assist and advise in different countries such as China, Bhutan and Thailand. During the Congress we learned about the influence Montessori education has had on the running of and the lives of the children in the Tibetan Children’s Villages in India over the last 40 years.

Maria Gabriella Lay from the ILO [International Labour Organisation - which is an arm of the United Nations] spoke to us about the issue of Child Labour around the world. She conducts a program called SCREAM [Supporting Children's Rights through Education, the Arts and the Media]. Part of this program is to abolish child labour is to raise awareness through school programs in the western world. Forestville Montessori School has been participating in this program.

During the Congress Montessori Teacher Training Institutes from around the world generously offered scholarships supporting students from Tibet, Bhutan etc.

Another Congress initiative was the Australian Montessori Children's Foundation which had its launch during the Friday night of the Congress. This will initially support indigenous education in Australia, provide scholarships for indigenous teachers and students and will also look at various aspects of parent support.

As you can see from the above all these objectives go way beyond the classroom.

These objectives are underscored by the beautiful observations and glimpses we have of our children - the true potential of the Child.

As Montessorians we are proud to be involved with these noble objectives, which are to serve mankind through the strength, love and power of the child.

Matty van Drempt
Congress Coordinating Committee