



The Montessori

OBSERVER

Preparing the Environment

Published by the International Montessori Society • 912 Thayer Ave. • Silver Spring, Md. 20910 • Phone (301) 589-1127

A Few Clear Words About The Montessori "Method"

"One would like to know in a few clear words what this Montessori Method really is."

Maria Montessori
from *The Formation of Man*,
1955 ed., p. 7

After some forty years of experience with her unique approach to the child, Dr. Montessori came to recognize a considerable confusion surrounding this "method" which so many now claim to practice. Since her first discovery of the "normalized" child in 1907, a deluge of conflicting viewpoints, compromises, opinions and interpretations have emerged to assert their own claim to define the real Montessori "Method." *"In short, we find ourselves in a maze"* (Maria Montessori, *Id.*, p. 7)

Prejudices

... the revelations of the child are not at all so difficult to obtain, the real difficulty lies in the adult's old prejudices concerning him."

Maria Montessori
from *The Formation of Man*,
1955 ed., p. 22

The different viewpoints as to the Montessori "Method" reflect age-old prejudices which individuals unconsciously bring to their study of the work of Dr. Montessori. Montessori training which leaves such prejudices fundamentally unchallenged results in the emergence of viewpoints of the Montessori "Method" which fail to deliver on the promise of a truly "normalized" child. Justifications, conceptualizations and assumptions about "normalization" and other ideas from the work of Dr. Montessori have now become so firmly engrained within various limited, prejudicial expressions of Montessori education that the true creative expression of Dr. Montessori's approach to the child has been substantially deterred and distorted in society.

Teacher Training

"The real preparation for education is a study of one's self. The training of the teacher . . . is something far more than a learning of ideas. It includes the training of character; it is a preparation of the spirit."

Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.130

Dr. Montessori's own viewpoint as to her approach to the child reveals the extent to which the resolution of these prejudices are vital to her true work and purpose to create a "new education."

Montessori's Viewpoint

"For the word, 'method', we should substitute something like this: 'means offered to deliver the human personality from the oppression of age-old prejudices regarding education.'"

Maria Montessori
from *The Formation of Man*,
1955 ed., p. 8

Dr. Montessori's viewpoint as to her "method" invariably challenges all prejudicial and limited conceptions regarding her

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 2

Spring and Damper

"If one pulls in a given direction, there will always be another who pulls the opposite way. . . . A wonderful harmony between opposing forces. The result is not so much an agreement, as a harmonized opposition, an agreed disagreement."

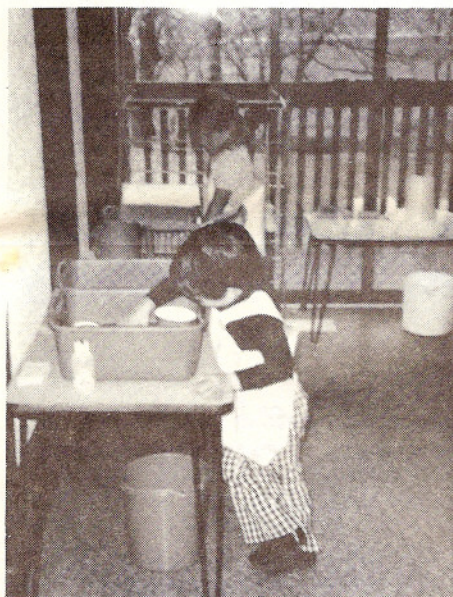
Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 143

Dr. Montessori recognized that every creative expression inherently involves opposition—"an agreed disagreement" such as the mechanism of a spring expanding against the opposition of a damper. The damper permits a constructive use of the energy of the spring by opposing the spring's vibration and thereby preventing the total destruction of the structure to which the spring is attached.

By analogy, one's creative expression of a commitment to Montessori principles (the "spring") expands against the opposing forces of one's personality (the "damper") so that one's ability to create a genuine Montessori environment is gradually realized within one's self.

Likewise, the "new education" is created through one's participation and communication with others on behalf of a commitment to Montessori principles (the "spring"). Opposing such a creative expression of the "new education" are one's

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 1



Practical life work at the Clay-Platte Children's House in Kansas City, Missouri.

Clay-Platte School

Kansas City, Missouri

The Clay-Platte Children's House in Kansas City, Missouri is owned and operated by Charles and Shirley Plath. This IMS Montessori school member is located on ten acres of land in facilities which were built specifically for children.

The school serves an enrollement of 212 children from birth to 12 years of age. Full and half-day sessions are offered at both the primary and elementary levels. Special program features include art, music, dance and a summer Montessori program. Spanish, French and German are provided as foreign languages for elementary aged children.

Mrs. Plath reports that Orff music instruction and aerobic classes have recently been started for children aged 2½ to 12 years. In addition, she states that *"Each Spring we have a camp-out on our ten acres and a talent show presented by our older children."*

For further information, contact: Shirley and Charles Plath, Clay-Platte Children's House, 5901 N.W. Waukomis Dr., Kansas City, MO, 64151, Tel. (816) 741-6940.

Preparing the Environment

"The teacher's first duty is therefore to watch over the environment . . . Its influence is indirect, but unless it be well done there will be no effective and permanent results of any kind, physical, intellectual or spiritual."

Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 278

The important role of the environment in Dr. Montessori's approach to the child is reflected by the fundamental principle, "Preparation of the Environment." Preparing an environment suitable to the "normalized" child applies this principle to challenge many common prejudices and assumptions in adult society.

Adult Environment

"The master of all is a mysterious entity. The tyrant is all powerful, like a god. It is the environment that swallows up and crushes the man."

Maria Montessori
from *The Formation of Man*,
1955 ed., p. 7

The adult's view of "environment" assumes the dominance of "society" which imposes a condition of absolute limitation and control over one's creative expression and individual liberty. Such a limited notion of one's environment begins to form at the very moment of birth when the hostile nature of one's surroundings is most keenly felt. From the trauma of birth, the notion of a tyrannical, hostile environment becomes intimately incorporated into one's "personality." Ultimately, this notion becomes manifest as a "society" which assumes the role of "all powerful tyrant."

"Society"—with its conventions and camouflage to repress feelings from early childhood—clearly opposes expression of the child's absolute love and harmony with its surroundings.

The Infant's Challenge

"An adult environment is not a suitable environment for children, but rather an aggregate of obstacles that strengthen their defenses, warp their attitudes, and expose them to adult suggestions."

Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 109

The child's creative expression of its true nature finds an immediate, hostile confrontation with adult society from the moment of birth. The sensitive newborn finds itself completely subject to an alien, adverse environment insensitive to one's pain, suffering and confusion.

The newborn infant is compelled to adjust its new life functioning to the accelerated timetable of hospitals and adult needs. The child's slower, natural rhythm of its own inner guiding instincts are virtually disregarded. The infant's challenge is

thus to adapt itself to these hostile, impatient demands of adult society.

Integrating the Personality

"A child is forced to come to terms with his surroundings and the efforts entailed lead to an integration of his personality."

Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 35

The infant's accommodation to environmental demands results in the formation of one's own unique personality. Typically, such accommodation reflects a set of defenses against an alien environment, emerging as a gross distortion of the child's true nature; i.e., a superficial personality dominated by capricious behavior, fantasy, tantrums, possessiveness, crying for no apparent reason, sloth and disobedience.

The adult's effective preparation of the child's environment intends to call forth the true nature within the child by removing those obstacles which have been unconsciously imposed on the child by a hostile adult society.

Removing Obstacles

"...we must therefore create a favorable environment . . . all that is needed is to remove the obstacles."

Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 136

Removing obstacles from around the child is opposed by lack of awareness of these obstacles as a result of their intimate incorporation into one's own personality formed in early childhood. Typically, the adult has so firmly engrained the notion of tyranny and oppression into one's being that such prejudices appear as a "reality" to which all must submit.

By contrast, the adult's effective preparation of the environment for children involves an awareness and attention to all obstacles which arise around the single child. Such obstacles emerge within the three components which make up the child's environment: (1) "physical objects"; (2) "other children"; and (3) "adult."

Physical Objects

"...the child shows an irresistible urge to touch everything . . . His intelligence needs a world of things which provide him with motives for his activity."

Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 168

The child's intellectual development — upon which all other aspects of its normal growth fundamentally depend — requires a wide range of physical objects through which concentration and interest can be aroused. The young child's psychic and mental order are fundamentally realized

through sensorial experiences with physical objects. Such experiences are profoundly incorporated into the child's being through its "absorbent mind."

The ordinary disorder, incompleteness and complexity of physical objects as they generally appear in adult society significantly deter the child's ability to acquire those sensory experiences vital to normal development in the formative period of early childhood. An effective preparation of physical objects in the Montessori environment must therefore assure their order, simplicity, completeness and beauty so that manipulation of such objects will meet the child's deep inner needs and instincts with regard to normal intellectual and psychic development.

Other Children

"The stimuli of the environment are not only the objects, but also the persons, with whom our relations are not merely sensorial."

Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Activity*
in *Education*, p. 325

Cont'd. on Page 3, Col. 2

Look for the
May Observer
featuring
Perfection

The Montessori Observer
published by
INTERNATIONAL MONTESSORI SOCIETY
912 Thayer Ave.
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 589-1127
Lee Havis, Executive Director

The *Montessori Observer* is mailed eight times each year to IMS members throughout the world. The *Observer* is sent during the following months: Jan., Feb., March, April, May, Sept., Oct., and Nov. The purpose of this publication is to provide news and information about the development of Montessori education to extend awareness of Montessori principles and promote harmony within the Montessori community.

INTERNATIONAL MONTESSORI SOCIETY
The International Montessori Society is sponsored by Educational Services, Inc., a non-profit corporation organized in Maryland, U.S.A. The purpose of IMS is to support the effective application of Montessori principles throughout the world.

IMS ADVISORY BOARD
Elizabeth Hainstock, Educator, Author
Romalda Spalding, Reading Specialist
Dr. Arthur Janov, Psychologist
Dr. R. Orin Cornett, Research Professor

SUBSCRIPTION
Subscription to this publication may be obtained by requesting IMS membership which is open to all individuals for a \$15 yearly fee. IMS school members also receive a subscription to the *Montessori News*. Complete the membership application form to obtain an individual subscription and other benefits of IMS membership.

ADVERTISING
Advertising space is available for services and products relating to Montessori education. Marketplace ads are \$7/line. Position and Placement ads are \$10 each and will be set and edited by us to conform to space requirements. Write for our advertising outline for rates and other information about design advertising.

© 1984 . International Montessori Society

Legal Brief



Religious Discrimination in Child Care Regulation

Forest Hills Early Learning Center v. Lukhard

No. 82-1679

Decided: Feb. 7, 1984

On Feb. 7, 1984, the Fourth Circuit Federal Court of Appeals (Richmond, VA) held that the State of Virginia's exemption from licensure requirements for child care centers "conducted under the auspices of a religious institution" was "facially overbroad as a permissible accommodation to any free exercise rights of the sectarian operators of child care centers." In brief, the Court held that such an exemption from regulation appears to unfairly discriminate against private non-religious child care center operators who must comply with many detailed, burdensome requirements in order to obtain a license to operate in the state.

The *Forest Hills* case is important to Montessori education since many Montessori schools are regulated as child care centers or private schools under licensing requirements similar to those imposed in Virginia. Commonly, such government regulation provides a broad exemption from license requirements to private parochial schools and child care centers operated by religious organizations. In general, Montessori schools are *not* exempted due to their non-religious ownership and operation.

Since the vast majority of private schools and child care centers are exempted from licensing requirements due to their religious affiliation, public interest in the licensing of Montessori schools is minimal. Now that all private schools and child care centers appear destined to face the same burdensome state licensing procedures and practices, a new public interest in this issue may very well result in significant favorable changes affecting the regulation of Montessori schools.

The IMS law suit in Maryland challenging that state's regulation of Montessori education raises the similar issue of religious discrimination as presented in *Forest Hills*. In Maryland, an exemption from licensure is provided to those private schools which are "operated by a bona-fide church organization." The *Forest Hills* case, decided in the same judicial circuit as that of the state of Maryland, represents a compelling precedent to assert in the IMS law suit with regard to unfair religious discrimination.

The Forest Hills case will be published and available soon in local law libraries. Contact IMS for further details and information.

Preparing the Environment

Cont'd. from Page 2, Col. 3

Obstacles with "other children" generally arise in disruptive interaction with another's activity, fantasy involvement and other such disruptive social interaction away from some constructive activity. The adult effectively removes such obstacles by approaching the more passively engaged child in the disruptive circumstance. This child's attention is directed away from the misbehaving child in a friendly, non-judgmental manner.

Adult

"...adults are also a part of a child's environment . . . they should not be an obstacle to a child's independent activities, nor should they carry out for him those activities by means of which a child reaches maturity."

Maria Montessori

from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 110

The adult's unconscious, prideful assumption of "perfection" with children generally deters effective preparation of this aspect of the child's environment. Removing one's own detrimental influence from the child's environment invariably requires a deep inner self-examination and awareness with regard to one's own personality.

Adult as Obstacle

"...the teacher can be the greatest obstacle of all."

Maria Montessori

from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 264

The adult's personality is readily present as a significant obstacle in the child's environment through one's unconscious reactive behavior; e.g., offering unnecessary "help" to children, correcting mistakes, imposing rules, fast movements, and excessive talking and attention to individual children. Such reactive behavior is so widely practiced among adults working with children that it is rarely recognized as an obstacle at all. Rather, such behavior is generally conceived of as "teaching." Unconscious reactions with children impose a form of adult tyranny over children which fails to establish an environment effectively prepared for the "normalized" child.

Role of Environment

"The environment is certainly secondary in the phenomenon of life. It can modify, as it can assist or destroy, but it can never create. The source of growth lies within."

Maria Montessori

from *Discovery of the Child*, p. 61

The child's instinctive hunger for interaction with its environment certainly destines the environment to play a vital role in the child's development. However, this vital role must necessarily follow the child's inner creative urges for such interaction.

The adult prepares the environment as a creative participation to realize the child's true nature. Preparing the environment as envisioned by Dr. Montessori is a genuine "force of nature" which functions in harmonious collaboration with the "teacher within" the child.

Positions & Placements

Montessori Teachers: Well-established school with primary and elementary classes. We have openings in both primary and 6-9 Elementary classes for September. We would like to start the 9-12 Elementary level in September. The purpose of the school is to serve children on low income levels. If interested, send resume to Sister Deanna Randall, 620 Elizabeth St., Denver, CO 80206.

Montessori Directress/or: (3-5). Full day and/or half-day. Well-established school, 45 minutes west of Chicago. Salary open, commensurate with experience. Contact: Montessori Learning Center, 595 South River St. Batavia, IL 60510, Director, Arthur J. Basler, Tel. (312) 879-2586

Montessori Teacher: (2-6). Full time primary teacher beginning the end of August. School has been established since 1965 and is located in a Tudor style house in a prestigious west Knoxville area. Send applications to: Mauri Leahy, Knoxville Montessori Children's House, 4311 Kingston Pike, Knoxville, TN 37919, Tel. (615) 525-6042.

Administrator/Teacher: (3-6). Personable with experience in administration as well as Montessori pre-primary training. Also, opening for full-day Montessori teacher. Salaries \$9500 - \$12,000 range. Amherst is located 1 1/2 hr. from Boston in western Mass. Univ. of Mass and 4 colleges close by. Send resume to: Molly Reynolds, Amherst Montessori School, 1066 So. East St., Amherst, MA 01002.

Montessori Teacher: (2 1/2-6). Sept. 1984, full-day, 2 classes per day. School is located 10 minutes from the Jersey shore beaches. Modern, comprehensive facility. Building is situated on 3 acres of wooded land. Salary negotiable. Send resume to: Montessori Academy of New Jersey, 3504 Asbury Ave., Neptune, N.J. 07753. Tel. (201) 922-9171; Director, Alma Torello.

Montessori Teacher: To start Fall, 1984. School located about 20 miles north of Washington, D.C. in suburban setting. Contact: Gretchen Gardner, Gaithersburg Early Learning Montessori School, 1199 Quince Orchard Blvd., Gaithersburg, MD 20876, Tel. (301) 948-2556.

Marketplace

Outstanding Children's Records/Cassettes

Educational discounts on *all* titles. Many artists including Hap Palmer, Pete Seeger, Ella Jenkins, Tom Glazer, etc. Write for inventory. Send SASE to: Spectrum Records and Tapes, 11507 Hitching Post Lane, Rockville, MD 20852 or call (301) 984-0356.

Illusion and Prejudice —

" . . . the kind of education still in vogue condemns the teacher to be a dictator . . . teachers of the older school hold firmly to irrational rules and have little to guide them but illusion and prejudice."

Maria Montessori

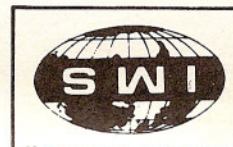
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.256

Address correction requested

912 Thayer Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20910

OBSERVER

The Montessori



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 3875
Silver Spring, MD

Creative Center Kenmore, New York

The Kiddie Haven Creative Center is a Montessori School in Kenmore, New York under the co-ownership of **Dianne Wasch** and **Gladys Rogers** Directors of this IMS Montessori school member is Virginia Paul.

The Creative Center school serves an enrollment of 55 children ages 2-6 with both full and half-day Montessori sessions. A Montessori day care program extends the services of this school from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. five days a week, 52 weeks per year.

Special program features of this school include French as a foreign language, art and music. A summer Montessori program is also provided.

For further information, contact: Virginia Paul, Kiddie Haven Creative Center, 749 Englewood Ave., Kenmore, NY 14223, Tel. (716) 835-7071.



Children engaged in practical life activity at the Kiddie Haven Creative Center —Kenmore, New York

Spring and Damper

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 3

association and agreement with the forces of distortion and limitation in society (the "damper").

The International Montessori Society, with its growing membership participation of almost six hundred schools and individuals throughout the world, reflects the "spring" force of energy creating the "new education." The opposing "damper" in this regard is provided by those organizations which view "Montessori" as a limited body of knowledge, ideas and concepts bound within the tyranny of external authority and domination by adult society.

One's function to serve as either a "force of nature" (a "spring"), or an "instrument of society" (a "damper"), simply reveals one's own cosmic role in the unfolding creation of Dr. Montessori's vision of a "new education."

Montessori "Method"

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 3

approach to the child. The common conception of "Montessori education" as that which is approved, recognized or certified as such by a "Montessori" organization or other self-professed authority or "expert" reflects a significant current form of oppressive prejudice to which the true Montessori "Method" is clearly opposed.

The "Method" Itself

In truth, the Montessori "Method" expresses an intangible inner commitment to certain absolute principles, the source of which lies completely within oneself. The realization of such an inner commitment with children creates a psychic condition within which the "normalized" child is compelled to emerge.

The "proof" of the true Montessori "Method" lies not in the presumed wisdom of some "Montessori" body or a particular brand of certification. Rather, one's own experience of the "normalized" child provides the conclusive "proof" of the true Montessori "Method" - a proof which readily speaks for itself.

The Primal Institute

Arthur Janov, Ph.D

Vivian Janov, M.A.

Brochures, Newsletter,
Interviews on Request

Financial Plan Available

2215 Colby Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90064
(213) 478-0167