



The Montessori

OBSERVER

Observation

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IMS Extends Beyond the United States

IMS recently instituted a broad-ranging campaign to extend and enhance its communication with schools and individuals interested in Montessori education beyond the United States. The first phase of this effort is to establish direct personal contact between the IMS office in Silver Spring, MD and each country's embassy located in nearby Washington, D.C.

Lee Havis, IMS executive director, has already contacted many embassies in Washington, D.C. to discuss the work of the International Montessori Society and to request assistance in locating interested schools and individuals in their countries. Significantly, the embassies of France, Spain, Mauritius, Tunisia, Gambia, Swaziland and Sri Lanka have specifically requested a regular mailing of IMS publications, such as the "Montessori Observer," in order to maintain and enhance their continuing relationship with the International Montessori Society.

On Friday, Jan. 20, 1984, Mrs. Delande S. Wijeratne, First Secretary of the Embassy of Sri Lanka, met with Mr. Havis at the IMS office in Silver Spring, MD to discuss Montessori education in Sri Lanka and how IMS programs might serve the work of Dr. Montessori in her country. Mr. Havis believes that such personal relationship and association with each country's embassy staff in Washington, D.C. is an important first step in extending the work of the International Montessori Society to many countries throughout the world.

Dr. Dr. Dr. Dr.

The "Real" Montessori

Free use of the term "Montessori" in the United States since 1967 has resulted in many diverse opinions and philosophies as to what is "real" Montessori. The "Montessori" certificate is now issued by many distinct organizations and institutions on the basis of widely varying requirements, content and criteria. Lacking a single accrediting agency for the recognition of a "Montessori" certificate, a significant obstacle exists for the mutual cooperation and communication among "Montessori" organizations which could ultimately resolve fundamental philosophical differences and distinctions in this regard.

Before his death in February, 1982, Mario Montessori (only son of Dr. Maria Montessori) spoke in Washington, D.C. about how to discern the "real" Montessori from those various philosophical expressions and formulations which have arisen around the work of Dr. Montessori. Mr. Montessori argued essentially that such differences of opinion were not really important; that the "normalized" child itself would eventually reveal what is the "real" Montessori.

Dr. Montessori herself recognized much confusion, contradiction and uncertainty with regard to the expression and development of her work since 1907. She observed that "constant comparisons and analogies" are made concerning her work in order to "establish some sort of compromise" with various philosophical ideas and approaches concerning the child (*The Formation of Man, 1955 ed., p. 6-7*).

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Children at Northville Montessori Center (Northville, Michigan) using Maluda's "Montessori" Psaltery.

Music in Michigan Montessori School

The Northville Montessori Center (Northville, Michigan) has recently introduced John Maluda's special musical instruments into its environment for children (*Observer, Vol. II, No. 8; Vol. III, No. 6*). Lynn Gall, director of this IMS Montessori school member, reports that the Maluda Psaltery and harp "have a lot of appeal to the children. Even their appearance."

Notably, Ms. Gall has found that the Maluda stringed instruments are readily introduced and employed by the children. She has found the audio tape and written material provided with these instruments very useful to enable the teacher's effective presentation of the instruments to the children.

The Northville school is located on a 6 acre site in a two-bedroom ranch house which was acquired in December, 1981. These facilities, including a recently built addition on the back of the house, provide sufficient space for three primary level classes and one elementary program. Optional full and half day sessions are available.

Special program features at the school include a health and nutrition specialist, French as a foreign language and an after-school program for art enrichment and Suzuki music. A summer day camp for eight weeks provides such activities as woodworking and outdoor life activities. The Northville school now plans to open a four-hour Saturday session which will offer a

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The Source of Growth

"The environment is certainly secondary in the phenomena of life. It can modify, as it can assist or destroy, but it can never create. The source of growth lies within. A child . . . grows because his potentialities for life are actualized, because the fertile seed from which life comes is developing according to its natural destiny."

Maria Montessori
from *Discovery of the Child* p. 61



Observation

"The first step to take in order to become a Montessori teacher is to shed omnipotence and become a joyous observer . . ."

Maria Montessori

from *To Educate the Human Potential*,
p.121-122

"Observation", one of the three fundamental Montessori principles, is the first, primary function and occupation of an effective Montessori teacher. To serve as an *observer*, rather than *teacher*, requires one's abstention from many common tendencies with children, including the compelling urge to "teach". Committed to "observation", the effective Montessori teacher reflects a poise and balance which consciously restrains the reactive behavior commonly associated with traditional "teaching".

Restraint

"The teacher must learn to control herself so that the child's spirit shall be free to expand . . . the essence of her duty is not to interrupt the child in his efforts . . ."

Maria Montessori

from *The Absorbent Mind*, p.272

To effectively observe is essentially a "do nothing" function—a restraint of otherwise commonly accepted adult "teaching". To successfully restrain one's "teaching" tendencies is to forebear from intervention to correct a child's mistakes, to control the traditional tendency to offer direct assistance to resolve a child's problem, and to withhold one's opinion, judgement or comment with regard to observed misbehavior or disorder. In moments of disorder, Dr. Montessori particularly recognized that "*. . . it is not so easy . . . to stand still and watch.*" (Id., p.272)

The First Moment

" . . . the disorder of the first moment is necessary . . . do nothing but watch."

Maria Montessori

from *The Montessori Method*, p.89

The traditional teacher commonly meets disorder and misbehavior with some form of direct suppression, control or manipulation. By contrast, the Montessori teacher follows the principle of "Observation"—i.e., to "do nothing but watch" in the first moment. Such observation invariably triggers within the adult a heightened sensory awareness of one's own inner feelings, thoughts and judgments regarding the situation. This profound self-awareness and inner examination enables the individual to become fully conscious of one's own deeply-held beliefs and prejudices about the child to which the adult is typically attached.

Prejudices

" . . . a prejudice has found its way into the adult—the notion that the life of the child can be changed or improved only through teaching. This prejudice impedes the understanding of the fact that the child constructs himself, that he has a teacher within himself."

Maria Montessori

from *The Formation of Man*,

1955 ed., p.62

The presumed need to "teach" the child is the most common of all unconscious prejudices about the child. This prejudice and other related prejudices and assumptions have solidified and have been reinforced over generations in adult society and "are so universal that it is difficult to have them recognized as such . . ." (Id. p. 61). Such prejudices emanate from an erroneous view of the child as an entity already known and defined in society.

Unknown Entity

" . . . all, or nearly all, see the child as he is commonly known only, not the child as he is, still an unknown entity."

Maria Montessori

from *The Formation of Man*, p.61

The common assumption about the child is that its nature is defined by recognized external appearances; e.g., playful, careless, capricious, disorderly, insignificant, empty, etc. At best, the child is generally viewed as simply "empty", devoid of inherent significance or inner direction, requiring instruction from the adult who must inculcate proper values and beliefs. In fact, the child is essentially an *unknown* entity, with a "teacher within" to direct its development towards the fulfillment of a purpose and destiny originally established upon conception. Typically, the adult fails to recognize or to appreciate the guidance of this "teacher within" due to the unchallenged prejudices and assumptions by which one is unconsciously blinded.

The Blind Spot

" . . . we speak of a blind spot in the heart of man . . . This blind spot is similar to that in the retina of the eye, which, nevertheless, is the organ by which all things are seen. The moral vision of the child falls upon the 'blind spot' of the human heart and there it strikes a barrier of ice."

Maria Montessori

from *The Formation of Man*,

1955 ed., p. 42

The adult is commonly blinded from effective and complete observation of the child by a massive "barrier of ice"—a complex system of reactive behaviors, tendencies, prejudices and assumptions which block awareness of the limitless love and

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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.

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LETTERS TO IMS

Jan. 3, 1984

Dear Lee Havis,

Thank you for your . . . interest in furthering Montessori education in Sri Lanka.

. . . as I am a qualified Montessori teacher and was actively involved in Montessori education prior to my present diplomatic assignment, I would very much like to visit your organization and obtain first hand information on your present programs, and how best they would serve and enhance the needs and present programs in our country.

Yours sincerely,

(Mrs.) Delande S. Wijeratne
First Secretary
Embassy of Sri Lanka (Washington, D.C.)

Jan. 18, 1984

Dear Mr. Havis,

What a surprise it was to receive your letter of Dec. 24th, 1983. And a pleasure!

I am very interested in I.M.S., both from the point of view of my own school and that of the Caribbean Montessori Society of which I am a founder, member and President.

Last year a number of teachers got together to form the Caribbean Montessori Society. Your letter is very timely since we are planning to hold our first ever Caribbean Conference, July 10-13, 1984, at the Cave Hill Campus of the University of West Indies, Barbados. I am interested in finding resource persons who might want to combine a Caribbean holiday with participation in the Conference . . .

I would appreciate it if you could send me names and addresses of persons who might be interested so that I can write to them . . .

I have been teaching for just over 30 years and have been involved with Montessori for about 15 years. Now we want to spread the philosophy to all our islands . . . any help we can get is welcome.

Yours sincerely,

Jacqueline Griffith-Banfield (Mrs.)
Barbados, West Indies

Ed. Note: For further information and communication, contact: Mrs. J. Griffith-Banfield, "Richmond", Welches, St. Michaels, 16, Barbados, W.I.

Jan. 1984

Gentlemen:

I am interested in learning about "Montessori"

My daughter is 20 months with her birthday coming up on May 15th. When would she be ready for your school?

Anxiously awaiting this information.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Janie Nedom
Moscow, Idaho

Ed. Note: See article in this issue entitled "When is the Child Ready for Montessori."

Observation

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harmony expressed by the child's "true nature". To melt such a massive glacier implicates a process of re-awakening the adult to one's own repressed feelings of pain, sadness and fear from one's own early childhood experiences which have been camouflaged through the common conventions and accommodations in adult society.

Reform of the Adult

"... reform of the adult . . . represents the re-awakening of a part of human consciousness which has been covering itself progressively with layer upon layer of impediments."

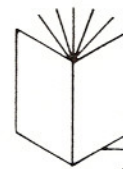
Maria Montessori
from *The Formation of Man*,
1955 ed., p.67

To follow the path of commitment to Montessori principles with the child invariably accompanies a "reform of the adult". Committed to the role of *observer* with children, the reformed adult discovers the ability to create an effective Montessori environment in which the new "normalized" child is compelled to spontaneously emerge. Ultimately, one's commitment to "observation" overcomes those massive prejudices and assumptions about the child which have historically deterred mankind from realizing its expansive purpose and destiny to "construct a new world full of marvels which surpass and overrules the wonders of nature." (Maria Montessori, *The Formation of Man*, 1955 ed., p.96)

Announcements

The Caribbean Montessori Society will sponsor its first conference on July 10-13 at Sherlock Hall, Cave Hill Campus, University of West Indies, Barbados. Theme of conference is "Culture and Imagination". Topics include Computers and the Young Child, Environmental Studies and Music for the Non-musical Teacher. Registration is \$35. For further information, contact: Jacqueline Griffith-Banfield, "Richmond" Welches, St. Michael 16, Barbados, W.I.

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Book Review

Sensorial Ideas

Pub. 1983 By Marlene Barron

In *Sensorial Ideas*, Marlene Barron has set forth a systematic collection of activities and tasks to expand and enhance the use of sensorial materials in the Montessori environment. This 26 page, 8½x11 inch booklet represents the work and experience of its author, Marlene Barron—a Montessori teacher and school director in New York.

Ms. Barron designed *Sensorial Ideas* especially for Montessori teachers to free them from "unnecessary, self-imposed strictures and prohibitions" which have limited the use of sensorial materials. *Sensorial Ideas* approaches the use of Montessori sensorial materials through distinct "levels of use" and "material strategies" which conveniently organize a wide range of sensorial activity - from classical presentation to decoding, encoding and non-standard measurement tasks.

Sensorial Ideas presents a theoretical overview of the underlying organization of the sensorial area and explores the numerous possibilities inherent in various specific apparatus. Ms. Barron begins this exploration with the premise that a child's ability to replicate a "classical" presentation or lesson given by the teacher does not imply understanding of the concept or sense awareness involved; only when the child can initiate patterns is the child understanding the concept and beginning to move into abstraction.

Sensorial Ideas shows how ordinary classroom and home materials, such as chairs and silverware, can be employed to provide useful sensorial experiences parallel to those offered by the more traditional Montessori materials. Ms. Barron's work shows that the basic underlying comparisons and distinctions in nature are the fundamental, primary guide to the child's sensorial experience and constructive work in the Montessori environment - not some rigid, predetermined set of exercises, lessons and materials.

To order *Sensorial Ideas*, send \$10 plus 50¢ postage to: Marlene Barron, 670 West End Ave., New York, New York, 10025.

Music in Michigan

Cont'd. from page 1, Col. 2

program of music, drama and arts and crafts.

For further information about the school, contact: Lynn Gall, Northville Montessori Center, 40965 Opolo, Northville, MI 48167 Tel. (313) 420-0924. For information about the Maluda stringed instruments, contact: John Maluda, 1901 Ashmoor Lane, Anchorage, KY 40223.

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Positions & Placements

Montessori Primary Teacher; Administrator: two openings on staff of school. One for Montessori-trained administrator with teaching and/or administrative experience in a Montessori setting. Salary negotiable. One position for Montessori-trained Directress for primary classroom. Salary negotiable. School is a non-profit Parent Corporation with two primary classrooms and day care program. Staff of eight work together closely. School located 2 hours south of San Francisco. Contact: Montessori Learning Center, P.O. Box 2051, 30 Hitchcock Rd., Salinas, CA 93902, Tel. (408) 455-1546.

Elementary Teacher: (9-12) To start August, 1984, grades 4-6; established elementary program. Contact: Linda Rubin, Racine Montessori School, 520 21st St., Racine, WI 53403, Tel. (414) 637-7892.

Montessori Teachers: (3-6) (6-9) For Sept., 1984. School is located 1/2 hour north of Boston on the historic North Shore. Near beaches, wild life sanctuary, museums and colleges. Send resume to: Susan McDonough, Head, Harborlight Montessori School, 243 Essex St., Beverly, MA 01915, Tel. (617) 922-1008.

Preschool Teachers: All day, half day. For Sept., 1984. Birmingham, AL. School established 1968 and goes from preschool through sixth grade. Send resume to: Creative Montessori School, P.O. Box 76208, Birmingham, AL, 35253. Attn: Barbara R. Spitzer, Director.

REMINDER

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The "Real" Montessori

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Effective Montessori teachers can readily confirm in their own personal experience that the "real" Montessori is indeed precisely a commitment to the principles of (1) "Observation"; (2) "Individual Liberty"; and (3) "Preparation of the Environment." The International Montessori Society challenges all teachers, parents and schools to likewise discover the "real" Montessori as one's expression of complete commitment to such principles which inevitably reveals the "normalized" child as envisioned by Dr. Montessori.

When is the Child Ready for Montessori?

Parents and teachers frequently must determine when a child is "ready" to participate effectively in a Montessori environment outside the home. This issue involves many considerations other than that of just chronological age. All relevant issues of a given situation must be considered; e.g., school policy and capabilities, willingness and confidence of the child to freely separate from the parent and the child's particular level of physical, mental and emotional functioning.

In general, Montessori schools have found that children of two years of age are normally able to function effectively in a mixed-age social setting with children as old as six. Dr. Montessori noted that "two-year old children are being admitted to our schools, while parents request admission of those of one and a half years." (Maria Montessori, *The Formation of Man, 1955 ed.*, p. 5). However, school policy often prohibits the attendance of children who have as yet not acquired bowel control so that staff members will not be unduly burdened with such functions as changing diapers.

Ultimately, the parent, as nature's true guardian of the child, must employ all of one's own reason and judgment to determine when a particular child is "ready" with regard to a given set of circumstances. The parent's knowledge of Montessori principles and prior observation of the particular school environment is certainly sound preparation to enable a responsible decision in this regard. Significantly, the child itself will show when it is "ready" for Montessori school by its willingness and desire to seek new experiences outside the home and away from the parent.