



The Montessori

OBSERVER

Perfection

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Two Kingdoms

"The adult is master in one area, but the child is master in the other, and the two depend upon each other. Both child and adult are kings, but they are rulers of different realms."

Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 195

Dr. Montessori's approach to the child recognizes the existence of two separate "kingdoms" within which the adult and child each function as completely distinct and sovereign rulers. Adult conflict with the child, such as the common "power struggle" situation, generally arises from a lack of awareness of one's proper realm of authority and control with regard to these two kingdoms.

The adult's "kingdom" is the environment. Within such domain, the adult is able to function as absolute ruler. By contrast, the child's "kingdom" is itself. The true ruler of the child's kingdom is found in the child's own creative being.

The adult is truly "all-powerful" in the child's environment but without any true power concerning the child itself. No environmental influence of control, manipulation or imposition can ever create the child. Dr. Montessori states clearly that "The environment is certainly secondary in the phenomena of life . . . The source of growth lies within." (*Discovery of the Child*, p. 61)

When the adult seeks to assert dominion over the child itself, conflict, destruction and failure ultimately result. Likewise, when the child seeks to dominate its environment, e.g., abusing physical objects,

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Impatience

"He who is impatient cannot appraise things properly . . . He reckons time solely by his own activity . . . what impresses him as a loss of time is a tension of the nerves, a moment of self-control, an interval of waiting without an immediate result."

Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Activity*
in *Education*, P. 132



Child working with color tablets at the Colesville Montessori School in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Waivers in Tennessee

On April 13, 1984, Governor Alexander of the state of Tennessee signed into law a bill to provide Montessori schools in the state with an opportunity to avoid the harsh effects of rigid regulations which would otherwise apply with regard to the operation of such schools. Specifically, the new law would authorize the Department of Human Services to grant waivers of certain day care requirements to Montessori schools under certain circumstances.

In general, the legislation applies to schools accredited by a "Montessori organization . . . which follows criteria for evaluation, accreditation and uniform practice that include group size, child/staff ratio, environment, materials, class activities and philosophy."

IMS Montessori school members in Tennessee are invited to inquire further as to means to benefit from this recent legislation. Contact: IMS, 912 Thayer Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20910.

Montessori in Maryland

The Colesville Montessori School, located in Silver Spring, Maryland, was founded in 1978. Martha Ann Thomas, founder of this IMS member school, has served as its director and primary teacher since its beginning.

The school's program includes both full and half day sessions for children ages 2½-6½. An extended day session for older children allows for daily afternoon activity focusing on such areas as language arts and math. A day care program in the early morning and late afternoon enables the school to offer a complete daily supervision of children from 7:00 am until 6:00 pm.

Special program features of this school include music and a special introduction to foreign languages. Every Friday, a school staff member from Brazil conducts a session which focuses on Spanish and Portuguese. Further awareness of these foreign languages is incorporated into the regular daily sessions since one of the children at the school is also from Brazil.

Music is a prominent aspect of the Colesville Montessori School since Ms. Thomas herself plays the piano, and regularly provides various musical activities for the children. In addition, parents who play such instruments as the guitar and auto-harp regularly participate with the children at the school.

Each year, during the week of Thanksgiving, the school provides an open house for parents and others in the Silver Spring area. A pot luck dinner during this time permits the parents to become personally acquainted with each other and the school staff. In addition, the children perform a special program for parents and others in the community.

For further information, contact: Martha Ann Thomas, Colesville Montessori School, 13100 Andrew Dr., Silver Spring, MD 20904 (301) 236-9622.

The Normal Child

" . . . the normal child is one who is precociously intelligent, who has learned to overcome himself and to live in peace, and who prefers a disciplined task to futile idleness."

from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 148



Perfection

"The teacher who sets out with the idea that she is perfect . . . is not a good teacher . . . If we seek perfection, we must pay attention to our defects . . . and recognize their existence as something unavoidable throughout life."

Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 246-247

Self-delusion as to one's own flawless "perfection" concerning the child commonly deters the effective application of Montessori principles. The adult who approaches the child from such a false view of oneself is generally unable to recognize or correct those inner failings which prevent the creation of a completely effective Montessori environment. Dr. Montessori teaches that recognizing one's own errors is a necessary aspect of following her approach to the child; that perfection without error is a complete illusion.

Illusion of Perfection

" . . . we imagine we are always following life's highway towards perfection. The truth is we make mistake after mistake . . . we live in a state of illusion shut off from reality."

Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 246

The adult dominated by an illusion of one's own "perfection" tends to view mistakes and errors as an occasion for justification and self-righteous judgment of others rather than as an opportunity for correction and true self-examination. Such an illusion of perfection, built up unconsciously from one's own personality formation in early childhood, is itself deeply hidden by a complex camouflage of social conventions and pride.

Mask of Perfection

"We hide our defects under the guise of noble and impelling duties . . . When we are criticized for our faults, we find it easy to excuse them . . . in reality, we are . . . concealing them under the mask of what we call 'beauty,' 'necessity,' 'the common good' . . ."

Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 151

The illusion of one's perfection concerning the child is generally so ingrained into the personality and so widely accepted in society that its existence is rarely even considered as such. Mistakes and unconscious inner failings defy discovery and correction through truthful self-examination since "we do not so easily accept the humiliation of being corrected by others. We would rather make a mistake than admit it." (*Secret of Childhood*, p. 150) A mask of perfection descends over the adult who thus proceeds to assert a god-like sovereignty and responsibility over the child during its critical early years of development.

Adult "Responsibility"

"Woe to us, when we believe ourselves responsible for matters that do not concern us, and delude ourselves with the idea that we are perfecting things that will perfect themselves quite independently of us! . . . the profound question arises: what, then, is our true mission and our true responsibility?"

Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Activity in Education*, p. 6

The adult's common presumption of god-like creative power over the child reflects an inflated sense of "responsibility" which urges unconscious reactive behavior generally recognized as "teaching" and "helping." The adult's impatient struggle to correct and suppress the child's various errors and misbehavior thus takes precedence over one's true mission to humbly serve the child's emerging true nature.

The Adult's True Role

"A child slowly perfects his activities. An adult can assist in shaping the environment but it is the child that perfects his own being."

Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 195

The adult's true role in the perfection of the child is limited essentially to support in the child's environment. *The child perfects its own being.* Effective adult functioning in this regard is thus provided around the child, such as by preparing physical objects which incorporate the quality of "control of error."

Control of Error

" . . . we come to a scientific principle which is also a path to perfection. We call it 'control of error' . . . If this principle is realized . . . then it does not matter whether teachers and mothers are perfect or not."

Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 248

The child's environment can provide a valuable support for the child's process of self-perfection through its "control of error"; i.e., means to enable the child to determine and correct its own errors free of opinion, judgment or correction from the adult. Such "control of error" is found in the precision, order, arrangement and simplicity of physical objects which enable the child to discover and correct its own mistakes through interaction with such objects.

Likewise, Montessori principles serve as a "control of error" for the adult to guide one's effective functioning with the child.

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September Observer featuring Spirit

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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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Announcements

The Kodaly Center of America will sponsor its seventh annual Summer Session July 8-Aug. 4, 1984 on the campus of Southeastern Massachusetts University in North Dartmouth, MA 02747. Program features music instruction for children according to the Kodaly Method. For further information, contact: KCA, 295 Adams St., Newton, MA 02158, Tel. (617) 332-2680.

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Two Kingdoms

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the adult is readily able to resolve and remove such influences through direct control of the environment. Indeed, the entire essence of effective management of misbehavior according to Montessori principles amounts to: "Control the Environment, Not the Child."

Nature calls on the adult to assert its rightful and complete authority over the child's environment to provide the psychological, intellectual and physical nourishment needed by the child according to the Montessori principle, "Preparation of the Environment." Similarly, nature requires a complete "Individual Liberty" for the child within the "prepared" environment to enable a full creative expression of its own true nature.

The adult and child function together harmoniously when the rightful rulers of the two separate kingdoms are recognized and respected. One's awareness of these two distinct, yet interdependent, realms of activity is vital to realizing true joy, satisfaction and power in the adult-child relationship.

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Perfection

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Self-Perfection

"We can conquer our evil tendencies . . . by repressing the outward manifestations . . ."

Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 150

The adult's perfection and mastery of Montessori education is primarily realized through one's awareness and conscious restraint of outward behavior inconsistent with the three fundamental Montessori principles: (1) "Observation"; (2) "Individual Liberty"; and (3) "Preparation of the Environment." These principles provide a genuine "control of error" which enable one to correct mistakes and defects as they arise in relation to the child. The appearance of the child's true "normalized" nature ultimately reveals that experience of progress which is inherent in one's process of self-perfection.

Perfection as Progress

"Adults, like children, seem to differ mainly in their defects, but hidden within their hearts there is something deep, common to all . . . a continuous tendency to progress."

Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 209

True perfection is a process which expresses a spontaneous tendency in all towards "the progress of mankind" (*Absorbent Mind*, p. 213) Such a universal tendency towards progress follows the necessary path of correcting errors which ultimately serves to create harmony throughout mankind. Dr. Montessori stated that "Errors divide men, but their correction is a means of union" (*Absorbent Mind*, p. 250) In Montessori education, the correction of errors is particularly vital since the ultimate purpose of such correction is the perfection of man himself.

The Child's Perfection

"The qualities to be encouraged are those found in the creative period, and if at that time they have no chance to establish themselves, they will not appear later."

Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 215

Dr. Montessori's life and work since 1907 has clearly shown that the true perfection of mankind can only be based on the normalization of the young child during its formative period. Such "normalization" is the vital means by which all mankind can become truly free from the domination of those defects and failings which have historically opposed a natural expression

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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 Teachers: Exciting challenge for certified Montessori Director. New Montessori school in Greater SW Houston is seeking a talented individual to develop a new school. Competitive compensation package. Qualified applicant send resume and salary history to: Carol Clements, 3507 Glen Lakes Ln., Missouri City, TX 77459.

Montessori Teachers: (3-6), (6-10). fill time and receive benefits. Salaries are negotiable. School founded in 1980 and includes programs from Toddler through Elementary with over 80 students enrolled and still expanding. Located in suburban Bel Air, 15 miles from Baltimore and 2 hours from Washington and Philadelphia. Contact: Claire J. Salkowski, Free State Montessori School, 224 N. Main St., Bel Air, MD 21014 (301) 836-9044.

Montessori Directress: (2½-6). Fill time, Fall '84. School located in rural New England, 1 mile from Dartmouth College in Hanover, NH. Job includes directing a morning program with 25 children and afternoon program with approximately 12 children. Someone with warmth and ability to establish positive relationships with parents and children desired. Applicant should have experience and training. Salary, \$14,000. Contact: The Montessori School of the Upper Valley, Box 368, Norwich, VT 05055, (802) 649-2827.

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The Montessori



Book Review

Montessori on a Limited Budget

by Elvira Farrow and Carol Hill

Pub. Education Systems Publisher, 1984

Elvira Farrow and Carol Hill have compiled in this 300-page manual an abundance of practical ideas and directions for making and using many Montessori materials. The emphasis throughout is on "keeping costs low and quality high".

An extensive bibliography, theoretical commentary and 21 pages of patterns extend further the value of this detailed reference guide to making and using Montessori materials. All parents as well as teachers, from toddler stage to the early elementary grades, should find this book an excellent reference guide as well as a step-by-step direction in the making of those materials commonly associated with the work of Dr. Montessori.

"Montessori on a Limited Budget" will now be available from IMS for \$19.50 plus postage and handling. 20% discount for IMS members. Write for a copy of the most recent "Montessori News" which contains a complete order form and information.

IMS Membership Directory

Listing IMS school and individual members.

New Spring, 1984 Issue

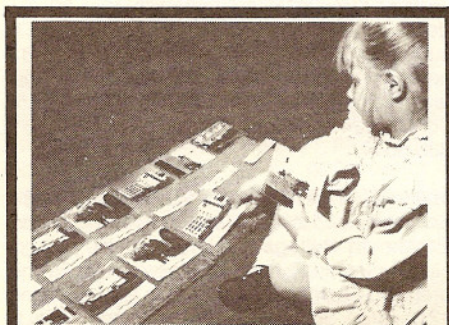
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Discouragement

"There is nothing more harmful than discouragement just when new formations are being made. If the child is not yet master of his own will, so much the less can he obey the will of someone else."

Maria Montessori
from Absorbent Mind, p. 259

Perfection

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of true perfection. Even "imperfect" adults can effectively participate in the true perfection of mankind by one's committed application of Montessori principles with children.

The Center of Perfection

"The great task of education must be to serve and preserve a normality which, of its own nature, gravitates towards the center of perfection."

Maria Montessori
from Absorbent Mind, p. 239

The adult who follows the path committed to Montessori principles functions as a force of nature to enable the emergence of the child's self-perfecting true nature. The "normalized" child thus reveals that inner natural tendency in all to gravitate towards a perfection of character and spirit which serves to guide and direct the true perfection of all mankind.

IMS Montessori School Membership

Is your school committed to the effective application of Montessori principles? If so, IMS invites you to publicly acknowledge this commitment through IMS Montessori school membership. For an annual fee of \$45.00, your school receives a certificate of membership and listing in the IMS Membership Directory. Additional benefits include:

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 5. "Montessori" bumper sticker;
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Send fee with response form to apply or write directly to:

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