



The Montessori

Spirit

OBSERVER

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Children working at the Montessori School of Elkhart (Elkhart, Indiana)

IMS Certification Recognized in Georgia, Indiana and Kansas

Certification of completion of the International Montessori Society independent study course has recently been accepted for purposes of meeting certain staff training requirements in the day care licensing regulations of the states of Georgia, Indiana and Kansas (U.S.A.). This recognition of IMS training certification for Montessori teaching means that graduates of its basic independent study course may apply such educational coursework towards meeting the required academic qualifications to teach in Montessori schools in those states.

Other states have already either recognized IMS teacher certification or are in the process of offering their formal approval. Such recognition is somewhat complicated by the fact that staff training requirements for Montessori schools vary considerably from one state to another—ranging from virtually no training requirements whatsoever in some states to a substantial college level academic background in others. Some states offer waivers and exceptions on an individual basis, depending on such factors as experience and related educational background.

The International Montessori Society considers its communication with government day care licensing agencies as a most vital facet in its continuing effort to assure the creation and effective operation of authentic Montessori educational programs. Recognition of the IMS independent study course by state day care licensing agencies is an important step in asserting the distinctive nature of preparation for Montessori teaching so that the hiring and employment of truly qualified Montessori teachers will not be unduly impeded by pertinent government licensing requirements.

The New Teacher

"... the new teacher ... should generate in her consciousness a conception of life capable of transforming her ... She should become a providential 'force'."

Maria Montessori

from *Spontaneous Activity in Education*, p. 139-140

Montessori in Elkhart, Indiana

The Montessori School of Elkhart, Indiana (Elkhart, Indiana) offers full and half-day Montessori programs for children from birth to age six. This IMS member school is directed by **Sally A. LaRocca** and serves an enrollment of about 150 children.

Special features of the Elkhart School include parent education and a summer Montessori program. Ms. LaRocca also expresses a particular interest in "enrichment ideas" for the afternoon portion of her all-day program from 3-6 pm.

For further information and communication, contact: Sally A. LaRocca, Montessori School of Elkhart, 416 E. Crawford St., Elkhart, Indiana, Tel., (219) 264-3037.

Sylvia Solis

... An Inspiring Spirit

The recent death of Sylvia Solis, graduate of the 1982-83 IMS/Santa Rosa Montessori Teacher Training Program, calls to mind how fleeting and precious is the opportunity to live as a human being. She died very suddenly in Spring, 1984, at the young age of only 39 years, leaving a husband and family of several young children. At the time of her death, Sylvia was pursuing her goal of Montessori teaching by conducting a program in her home for young children in the Rohnert Park, California area.

Sylvia Solis grew up in the Philippines as a child where she experienced many of the common oppressive, detrimental social conditions typically imposed on children in that culture. In the IMS/Santa Rosa course, Sylvia challenged those detrimental conditions still in her personality from childhood with a noteworthy determination, humility, patience and courage.

Sylvia's progress during the course was most evident in her growing ability to restrain detrimental personality expressions with children; i.e., to "control the environment, not the child." As she became aware of deeply embedded detrimental attitudes within herself, such as "children are weak,"

Cont'd. on Page 3, Col. 3



Spirit

by Lee Havis

"... the spirit also has its nature, and it is the life of the spirit that should dominate human existence at every stage."

Maria Montessori
from *Discovery of the Child*, p. 320

Montessori education recognizes the "spirit" as integral and foremost in its uniquely creative purpose of freeing the child from all forms of adult tyranny. By contrast, traditional education virtually disregards spiritual development, limiting its efforts to the child's outward physical well-being and intellectual development. Dr. Montessori viewed the child's "spirit"—that inner potential from which emerges all of life's visible expressions—as a vital reality upon which all other forms of human existence must invariably depend.

The Child's Spirit

"... the child's psychic life is independent of, precedes, and vitalizes every exterior activity."

Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 32

Prior to birth and even before the moment of conception (when biological potentialities are initially determined), the child's spirit is mysteriously present in the love and union of the child's parents. Emanating from this ultimate creative force of the universe, the child's inner psychic life mysteriously emerges to guide the destiny of all external manifestations, whether physical or intellectual.

From birth to about six years of age, the child's fragile spirit is nurtured and supported within the child by its surrounding environment. The child is thus a sort of "spiritual embryo" during this early formative period of childhood—an unknown and intangible being which only emerges as a formed personality after about the age of six.

The "Spiritual Embryo"

"The plan of creation itself... is a kind of awakening of potential powers. These will have the task of directing the huge creative work to be done by the child, by this 'spiritual embryo.'"

Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 70

The young child's psychic life and character develop spontaneously within the child much as the physical body developed earlier within the mother's womb. Nurturing this "spiritual embryo" are those responsible parents and teachers who, by their presence in the child's environment, represent a critical psychic stimulus for the development of the child's delicate embryonic spirit.

The Adult Spirit

"We are the 'stimuli' by which their feelings... should be exercised... For the intellect, we have the various objects, color, forms, etc., but for the spirit, the objects are ourselves..."

Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 221

The adult oneself provides the most critical stimulus to the young child's growing spirit. The adult's patient, calm and friendly engagement with the child lends the type of supportive presence around the child which enables its spirit to freely manifest itself in the world. Effective Montessori teacher training must therefore provide a deep and probing spiritual preparation within the adult to deter those unconscious expressions of detrimental reactive and manipulative tendencies which are commonly imposed on children in the ordinary course of events.

Spiritual Preparation

"The real preparation for education is a study of oneself. 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. 131

The adult's effective inner preparation for Montessori teaching is to examine one's own personality to discover those unconscious inner errors and prejudices which deter a respect for the child as an "unknown entity." Such a challenging, precise spiritual preparation must necessarily involve a considerable courage, humility and creative imagination.

Imagination

"The teacher... must free herself from all preconceived ideas concerning the levels at which the children may be... In her imagination she sees that single normalized type, which lives in the world of the spirit."

Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 276

An initial challenge in Montessori teaching is to imagine the child's true "normalized" being—the material presence of the child's true spirit of complete love, peace and harmony—growing within a superficial outward appearance to the contrary. Such creative imagination must necessarily start from contact with a reality from which the "normalized" child can be truly realized; i.e., one's own complete inner commitment to the three fundamental guiding principles of Montessori education: (1) "Observation"; (2) "Individual Liberty"; and (3) "Preparation of the Environment." Lacking awareness of this reality within oneself, the "normalized" child remains essentially as a speculative fantasy only within one's mind.

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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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Book Review

Mommy, It's a Renoir! by Aline Wolf

Pub. Parent Child Press, 1984

"*Mommy, It's a Renoir!*" provides a practical guide for parents and teachers to help children "develop a simple familiarity with reproductions of fine paintings."

This professionally illustrated, 96-page introduction to art appreciation and history includes specific instruction to prepare and present postcard-size reproductions to children in a graduated series of eight steps. The children's exercise throughout is to match, pair, group, sort and otherwise sensorially manipulate and distinguish such reproductions.

Children as young as three can benefit from the simple sensorial experience of distinguishing similarities and differences among the reproductions. The more advanced series are primarily for children over six and includes suggestions for use of time lines upon which the various schools of art can be historically located.

Aline Wolf, author and publisher of many other useful materials pertinent to Montessori education, properly emphasizes in this latest publication the idea of following the child's own spontaneous interest in presenting the various materials—rather than conforming to the pre-arranged order indicated in the book. She states that "It is not a formal course with lesson plans, deadlines and tests."

Knowledgeable Montessori teachers will readily appreciate the considerable preparation and precision with which the materials and format have been developed. Such teachers should readily be able to benefit from having such excellent cultural materials for use by children in their environment.

Ms. Wolf also offers pre-arranged sets of art postcards for use in the various steps of the presentation series. These sets, as well as the book itself, can be ordered from Parent-Child Press, Altoona, Pennsylvania. Retail price, \$12.50. Postcards are available at additional cost.

Spirit

Cont'd. from Page 2, Col. 2

The Spiritual Battle

"When man loses himself in mere speculation, his environment will remain unchanged, but when imagination starts from contact with reality, thought begins to construct works by means of which the external world becomes transformed."

Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Activity in Edu.* p. 241

The adult's spiritual battle is to become aware of the reality of one's complete inner commitment to the three fundamental Montessori principles as contrasted with attachment to a "reality" built upon the false notion of the "child" as conventionally viewed in society. Lacking contact with one's inner reality of complete commitment to Montessori principles, the vision of the "normalized" child amounts to an uncertain fantasy—"mere speculation." Conquest in this inner spiritual battle lies in becoming conscious of one's inner commitment to Montessori principles; i.e., the reality of a "Montessori education" which is created completely within oneself.

Conquest of Consciousness

"All spiritual development is a conquest of consciousness, which assumes to itself something that was formerly outside. It is by going along this road of discovery that civilization advances."

Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 15

To realize that which brings forth the "normalized" child as a reality completely within oneself is the ultimate spiritual conquest upon which the creation of Dr. Montessori's "new education" in society fundamentally depends. Such a conquest must invariably challenge and overcome the many common misconceptions and distortions of Dr. Montessori's work which essentially view "Montessori education" as something outside of oneself; e.g., certification from a certain "approved" course of study; affiliation with a certain presumed "official" organization; a pre-determined curriculum or technology in the use of materials; a vague, complete or limited assortment of concepts and ideas; etc.

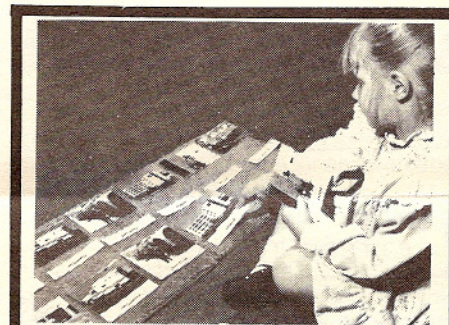
The ultimate spiritual conquest in Montessori education is most evident in the appearance of the "normalized" child in society—a materialized spirit of complete love, peace and harmony perfecting the character of mankind throughout the entire world.

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Montessori Ctr. for sale. Bus., Bldg., Prop., \$185 K. Suffolk Cty., L.I., N.Y., Inquiries to: Box 97, Port Jefferson, N.Y. 11777, Tel. (516) 473-6161.



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Sylvia Solis

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 3

Sylvia learned to restrain outward dependency "helping" behavior with children. She stated that "I've seen how the children changed from expecting me to help them to one where they help themselves or their peers. How wonderful to see this progression of theirs towards independence."

Sylvia's participation and work in the IMS course was a magnificent contribution to the progress of Montessori education, constantly extending her being beyond the limiting boundaries of her past to boldly serve as a "force of nature" on behalf of the emergence of the "normalized" child in society. Steadfastly dependable and unrestrained in generosity towards others, she fulfilled every possible opportunity in the course with a characteristic warmth, energy and enthusiasm.

The memory of Sylvia Solis lives on as a vivid encouragement and inspiration for those with whom she was so closely related and associated in purpose in the 1982-83 IMS/Santa Rosa course. Her early death, after such a complete and extensive preparation for Montessori teaching, reminds one of the urgency there is to express one's complete commitment to Montessori principles with children while there is still time to bring forth the reality of Dr. Montessori's vision of a "new education" in the world. Such commitment and vision was very evident in the life of Sylvia Solis—a truly inspiring spirit.

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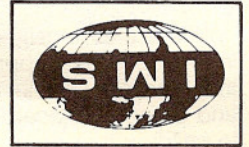
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The Montessori



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LETTERS TO IMS

June 12, 1984

Dear Mr. Havis,

We are delighted with your crusade to return to the pristine Montessori concepts. We agree with you that the Montessori institutions have neglected the ultimate goals of Maria Montessori that being the normalization of the child. We would like to be part of your association. . . .

Having read your literature we feel a kinship with your fervor.

Your Sincerely,

George R. Willy
Shanti T. Willy
Baytown, Texas

June 9, 1984

To IMS:

I anticipate the setting up of a Montessori environment in my area, and to be a thoroughly effective teacher I need your communication. I very much appreciate your approach to the 2-6 year old child with principles of "OBSERVATION", "INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY" and "PREPARATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT."

Candace E. Sheeran
Soldotna, Alaska

July 14, 1984

Dear Mr. Havis,

Thank you for sending the OBSERVER to my new address in California. We all enjoy reading it. We are all dedicated to the Principles of (the) Montessori system of education and are constantly working to spread its goals and purposes. We are also striving to educate the public to distinguish between a good Montessori school and a so-called Montessori school, and others who are Montessori only in name.

Respectfully,

Rev. Francis Dos Remedios
Fremont, California

New Montessori Center in New York



Child engaged in practical life activity at The Children's Montessori Center in Stony Brook, New York.

The Children's Montessori Center in Stony Brook, New York was established by **Kathrina Finkmann** in January, 1984. Ms. Finkman brings to this new enterprise a considerable background preparation including six years of teaching experience.

This new IMS member school is located a few miles from the New York State University and Medical Center at Stony Brook (the north shore of Long Island) and is conducted in space rented in a church building in the heart of town. The facilities include three acres of outdoor space and is only a short walk to the village duck pond.

The Children's Center serves a capacity enrollment of fifty (50) children from 1½ to 6 years of age and is the only Montessori full day child care facility in the area. The school is open on a daily basis from 7:30 am to 6:30 pm and includes a program in art, music, and dance for the children. A summer Montessori program is also provided.

For further information, contact: Katharina Finkmann, The Children's Montessori Center, Ltd., Mill Pond Rd., Stony Brook, New York, 11790, Tel., (516) 689-8886.

IMS Membership Directory

Listing IMS school and individual members.

New Spring, 1984 Issue

Price - \$5.00 - Prepaid to IMS

REMINDER

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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