



The Montessori OBSERVER

Physical Objects

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Children working together at the Montessori Children's House of Shady Oaks (Redding, California)

Shady Oaks in California

The Montessori Children's House of Shady Oaks (Redding, California) was formally established in its present location by **Marion Darancette** in Fall, 1984. This school evolved from her efforts on behalf of Montessori education in Redding, California since 1981.

Ms. Darancette, founder and director of this Society member Montessori school, brings to her current responsibility a substantial background and experience over a period of some twenty years in Montessori education. Such experience includes the establishment and direction of numerous Montessori schools in the United States and Mexico during that period of time.

The present teaching staff at Shady Oaks have among them a considerable wealth of experience and background with children and education. Substantial community support of the staff and program operation is evident with a current enrollment of about 40 children and a large waiting list besides.

Since four members of the school staff are now enrolling into the Society's Independent Study Course, a considerable further preparation for Montessori teaching will certainly emerge to assure the school's continuing expansion of the work of creating the

"new education" in the Northern California area. Plans are already underway to expand current program operation in coordination with a local non-profit parents' group to establish an elementary program for children ages 6-9.

Special features of the Shady Oaks school include music, French as a foreign language, a summer Montessori program and parent education. Adjunct staff are also provided to offer assistance with movement and dance, violin, piano, special education and physical fitness.

For further information, contact: Marion Darancette, Montessori Children's House of Shady Oaks, 3500 Churn Creek Rd., Redding, California, 96002. Tel. (916) 222-0355.

Serving the Spirit

"We do not serve the child's body . . . he should not be served in this sense . . . We have to help the child to act, will and think for himself. This is the art of serving the spirit. . ."

Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 281

Society Appeal Set for Argument

The Society's court challenge to its prohibition of operation of a teacher training program in the state of Maryland has been tentatively set for oral argument before the Fourth Circuit Federal Court of Appeals (Richmond, Virginia) at their Summer, 1985 session. In this case, the Society asserts a denial of constitutional rights in the operation of private education. Notably, the Society has characterized the state of Maryland's policy over private education in that state as tantamount to a system of "academic content censorship."

A court-ordered injunction is sought to operate the Society's teacher training program in that state, as well as monetary damages for adverse actions and practices of the Maryland State Board for Higher Education during certain administrative procedures. The appeal also seeks interest on costs awarded by a prior favorable court judgment won by the Society in this matter.

In May, 1985, the Society completed submission of its appeal briefs and now awaits response from the state of Maryland. When all such briefs are properly before the court, a specific date for oral argument of this case will be determined. Interested parties are invited to contact the Society as to the exact date for oral argument or other details of this basic court challenge on behalf of educational freedom in the United States.

Membership Directory — 1985

The new Spring, 1985 Membership Directory of the International Montessori Society is now available, listing the entire current Society membership as of May, 1985. Notably, the directory includes a listing of 159 Montessori school members of the Society located in the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Spain and West Germany. The number of such member schools has been steadily growing each year since the Society's creation in 1979, expressing the expansion of acknowledgement of commitment to Montessori principles in the world.

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Physical Objects

by Lee Haviv

"...our materials are not a new means to be placed in the hands of an 'active' teacher to help her with her teaching."

Maria Montessori

from *Discovery of the Child*, p. 149

Physical objects with children ordinarily serve as either whimsical "toys" or, in traditional education, as rather significant "teaching aids" through which the adult imparts instruction. Ordinary "teaching" therefore emerges essentially as adult interpretation of the physical environment through various presentations and explanations according to certain pre-conceived lesson plans or curriculum objectives.

By contrast, Montessori education considers "physical objects" from a perspective of complete commitment to the three fundamental Montessori principles: (1) "Observation"; (2) "Individual Liberty"; and (3) "Preparation of the Environment". Notably, the "physical objects" comprise one of the three basic components of the child's total environment (i.e., "adult", "other children" and "physical objects") which must be properly "prepared".

Preparation

"...the teacher must refrain from interfering directly...she must prepare the environment with full knowledge of every detail, and she must know how and where to dispose the didactic material and introduce very carefully the children to exercise."

Maria Montessori

from *The Child*, p. 23-24

Montessori "teaching" with the physical objects aims essentially to "prepare" such objects for their independent use by children. Accordingly, "control of error", such as color coding, matching shapes and sizes and precise, uniform arrangement of parts, is a built-in feature of the Montessori "didactic" (i.e., "teaching") materials to assure their free use by children—i.e., independent of any direct adult control or supervision. Such "Preparation of the Environment" essentially invites the child's deep concentration on some self-directed activity with physical objects, thereby engendering the fundamental experience known as "normalization".

Normalization

"The transition from one state to the other always follows a piece of work done by the hands with real things, work accompanied by mental concentration. This psychological event...we have called by the technical term 'normalization'."

Maria Montessori

from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 204

The child's harmonious integration with its environment—i.e., "normalization"—necessarily implicates a vital role for

"physical objects" in Montessori education. Notably, the young child's uniquely creative mentality "absorbs" the natural order of the physical environment through a deep concentration and incorporates it entirely within itself. Physical objects must therefore present the child with a precise, complete and purposeful state of external order.

Order

"The didactic material, in fact, does not offer the child the 'content' of the mind, but the order for that 'content'."

Maria Montessori

from *Dr. Montessori's Own Handbook*, p. 136-137

The physical objects of a "normalizing" environment (i.e., "Montessori materials") have a quality of order which generally distinguish them from such devices as "toys" with which young children ordinarily engage. The order of such "Montessori materials" therefore necessarily entails some specific pre-conceived goals and purposes to be discovered and experienced by the child. Most notably, very simple exercises such as pouring water, scooping beans, and sweeping the floor, are those which most frequently precipitate "normalization". Such simple "practical life" activity tends eventually to give rise to the child's "normalizing" experience of deep concentration.

Concentration

"...the power to concentrate on something...occurs with the exercises of practical life."

Maria Montessori

from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 219

The most simple of physical objects—e.g., brooms, mops, brushes, spoons, cups, etc.—most often involve an activity arousing that profound concentration from which "normalization" must invariably emerge. (Of course, the objects themselves possess no inherent power or "magic"; rather, it is the child's own creative response, activity and experience in this regard which is foremost that which generates "normalization"). Indeed, an excessive complexity and quantity of materials—common in many "educational" environments for young children—add little, if anything, to the child's opportunity to "normalize" and may even considerably deter the emergence of "normalization" altogether.

Excessive Quantity

"...an excessive quantity of the educational material...may dissipate the attention, render the exercises with the objects mechanical, and cause the child to pass by his psychological moment of assent without perceiving it or seizing it."

Maria Montessori

from *Spontaneous Activity in Ed.*, p. 77-78

The proper external order for an effective "normalizing" environment for young children necessarily implicates a certain

simplicity of appearance and presentation of physical objects. An excessive quantity and complexity of materials can therefore readily confuse a young child, fostering a somewhat causal attitude towards such materials. The delicate emergence of "normalization" might therefore be fundamentally deterred by an abundance of various "educational" equipment—even if such materials are all properly used.

Proper Use

"...if children go indifferently from one thing to another, even if they use them all properly, this is not enough to remove their defects."

Maria Montessori

from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 206

Without the emergence of deep concentration, the child's proficiency in the proper use of materials is relatively insignificant. Mistaking such casual proficiency with physical objects for "normalization", the ineffectual Montessori teacher tends therefore to proceed with the improper and premature presentation of ever more advanced sensorial and cultural apparatus.

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Look for the

September Observer

featuring

Teaching

The Montessori Observer

published by

INTERNATIONAL MONTESSORI SOCIETY

912 Thayer Ave.

Silver Spring, MD 20910

(301) 589-1127

Lee Haviv, 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

April, 1985

Dear People,

Having completed the AMI training which took a full academic year of intense work, I am appalled to see the Independent Study Course that leads to a "International Montessori Society" certification. You obviously have no deep understanding of Montessori training if you feel that a person can become qualified to be a Montessori Guide through a correspondence course. It is shocking to see you luring people into this inadequate training by giving them the hope of implementing Dr. Montessori's principles with children. I wish Dr. Montessori was still alive so that she could tell you off in person.

...I refuse to have any association with your counterfeit association.

Sincerely,

Tara Mann
Raleigh, North Carolina

Ed. Note: Basing her opinion of "Montessori" on outer form only, without having any personal experience of the Society's Independent Study Course itself and apparently without having spoken directly to anyone who has actually completed the course as to its value and results, Ms. Mann eloquently reflects the blatant prejudice which abounds in society to deter the Society's work of creating Dr. Montessori's vision of a "new education". Ms. Mann's opinion reveals such prejudice within the Montessori community as a considerable obstacle to the emergence of the "normalized" child in the world. However, communication is expanding in this regard nonetheless as evidenced in the other letters reprinted below.

April 19, 1985

To IMS:

Please send me information on the IMS independent study course. I currently hold an AMI certificate, but your program may offer an interesting supplement. I believe we all need to work together and share our knowledge for the betterment of our children instead of hiding behind our own initials—AMI, AMS, IMS, PCME—we all share common goals. Thank you.

Mary DelSecco
Milpitas, CA

March 22, 1985

Dear Sir:

I do appreciate that you wrote to me and I thank you also for your other literature enclosed—"Montessori News," etc....Wishing you every success in your work for the dear children—I shall keep you and your wonderful work in my prayers! Please do remember us in yours...God Bless You and your great work!

Sr. M. John Bosco
St. Bridget's Convent
Columbo, Sri Lanka

Marketplace

School for sale. Beautiful Colorado. Well-established with stable enrollment. Located in small town with growing community. Contact: Arlene Doughty, (303) 241-1266.

IMS Membership Directory—Spring, 1985.

Listing all members of the International Montessori Society as of May 1, 1985. To order, send \$5.00 to: IMS, 912 Thayer Ave., Silver Spring, Maryland 20910.

Phonetic Readers. MCP Primary Readers in 4 sets of ten different readers. Each set presents ten interesting stories which emphasize a particular phonetic element. Set one, Short Vowels (MCP #1); Set two, Long Vowels (MCP #2); Set three, Consonant Blends (MCP #3); Set four, Consonant Digraphs (MCP #4). Each set is \$8.92 plus \$1.50 postage and handling. Order entire series for \$39.18. 20% discount to Society members. Send payment to: IMS, 912 Thayer Ave., Silver Spring, Maryland 20910.

Physical Objects

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Cultural Apparatus

"...experience shows that it is useless and harmful to give the children sensorial and cultural apparatus before they are ready to benefit from it."

Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 279

Impatience, prejudice and inexperience compels many teachers to give children advanced cultural apparatus before they have become fully "normalized". The adult's "teaching" in this regard thus gives rise to a manipulative struggle with the child directed primarily to the transmittal of superficial cultural knowledge. Obviously, such a struggle is contrary to the effective application of Montessori principles. The relatively modest "lesson" to present materials in Montessori teaching can thus readily be converted into yet another form of tyrannical adult imposition over the child.

Lessons

"The assistance which the teacher should give a child in presenting the material to him consists in showing him how to use it."

Maria Montessori
from *Discovery of the Child*, p. 153

A brief, simple and precise "lesson" is the Montessori teacher's customary means of occasionally showing a child the proper use of physical objects in the Montessori environment. The success of such a "lesson" depends far less on adult skill in the manipulation of some particular piece of work than it does on the child's own attention and interest in the work itself. Whatever "learning" that emerges from such a "lesson" therefore implicates the child's own creative internal activity.

Learning

"...internal activities act as cause; they do not react and exist as the effect of external factors. Our attention is not arrested on all things indifferently, but by those that are congenial to our tastes."

Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Activity in Ed.*, p. 160

The young child's selective response to physical objects in its environment reveals the inherently "self-educational" nature of all learning. Effective Montessori "teaching" is therefore essentially a process to discover the child's own instinctive interest through careful, patient observation.

Observation

"the child educates himself, and when the control and correction of error is yielded of the didactic material, there remains for the teacher nothing but to observe...the teacher teaches little and observe much."

Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Activity in Ed.*, p. 131

Montessori teaching is notably distinct from traditional education in its primary function to "observe" rather than to "teach". The adult's "observation" of the child working with physical objects kindles an insight and awareness of the child's immediate interest in mental development, thereby guiding

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 2



Book Review

Montessori Matters —A History Manual

By Sr. Mary Motz

Pub. by:

Sisters of Notre Dame
(Cincinnati, OH), 1985

The Sisters of Notre Dame continue their series of "Montessori Matters" publications for the Montessori community with their latest such effort entitled *Montessori Matters—A History Manual*. Written by Sr. Mary Motz, *A History Manual* follows the 1980 publication of her book *Montessori Matters—a Language Manual*. See *Montessori Observer*, February, 1981.

The Motz *History Manual* includes much of the terminology and approach considered by Dr. Montessori with regard to the introduction of History to the 6-12 year old child. Notably, the well-known "time-line" is explained and developed in a series of tangible, practical lessons which are readily employed with children. In addition, a series of simple experiments is included to enable children to discover the various laws and phenomena of nature concerning the states of matter, temperature and chemical reactions.

In brief, *A History Manual* offers some very useful practical guidance for the effective introduction of History to the elementary aged child. However, it must be recognized that use of this manual is necessarily restricted according to the teacher's fundamental preparation and experience in the application of Montessori principles with the elementary aged child. In addition, the assumption is implicit that the subject matter of History is presented as an integrated whole with other areas of interest that arise spontaneously from within the child: i.e. not as a part of a pre-conceived teacher-made curriculum. The complete value of any such subject matter presentation at the elementary level also assumes that children have become "normalized" through prior experience at the primary (2-6) level of Montessori education. Without such "normalization" and integration of subject matter based on interest, the value of *A History Manual* is considerably reduced.

Within the bounds of its proper use by a knowledgeable Montessori teacher, *A History Manual* can serve as a most beneficial resource guide for the introduction of History to the elementary aged child.

8½ x 11, spiral bound.

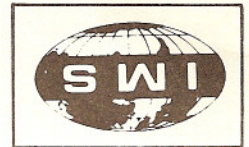
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OBSERVER

The Montessori



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Practical life exercise at the Shady Oaks school
in Redding, California

Positions & Placements

Montessori Teacher: Pre-school opening for class of five year olds, a.m. & p.m. Possibility of Summer employment. School is in its 13th year of operation, located in the Philadelphia Main Line area. Please send resume to: Lane Montessori School, Inc. 630 Clothier Rd., Wynnewood, PA 19096, or call (215) 649-3636.

Primary Teacher: (3-6) for Fall, 1985. Established teacher-operated school. 10 acres of land, elementary through aged 12 in Athens, Georgia. Salary neg. Call: (404) 549-8490; (404) 549-2240 (even.)

Montessori Teachers: (3-6), (6-9). Salary range depending on number of years of experience plus B.S. or M.S. degrees. \$10,000-\$16,000 for the 1985-86 school year. Send resume, college transcripts, Montessori certification, and three references to: Pat Meyer, Administrator, Calumet Region Montessori School, 2109 East 57th Ave., Hobart, Indiana 46342.

Physical Objects

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one's effective "preparation of the environment". Montessori education thus invites the child to actively experiment in the environment to freely touch, explore and manipulate a variety of orderly physical objects specifically provided for normalized intellectual development.

A World of Things

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

Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 168

A world of "things"—i.e., physical objects arranged for purposeful manipulation by children in the Montessori environment—provide an essential means for "normalization" to occur and to thereafter assure a continuing normal intellectual development. The proper disposition of such physical objects in the child's environment therefore reflects a necessary expression of one's complete commitment to Montessori principles to assure the emergence of the "normalized" child in the world.

Membership Directory

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 3

Listed in the new directory are also "associate school" members and "individual" members. These membership categories include schools and individuals in the United States, Australia, Canada, Kuwait, New Zealand, Pakistan, West Germany, China, Finland, Great Britain, Japan, Jordan, Mexico, Peru, South Africa and Thailand. The directory thus shows a growing awareness, interest and diversity of participation in the Society's work of creating the "new education" throughout the world.

Montessori school members of the Society receive a free copy of the directory at each new publication date.

Reflections . . .

by Marion Kaut-Darancette

On Observing Children

In twenty years of observing Montessori classrooms, . . . I have noticed one aspect of children's behavior common to all. That aspect is the children's self-motivated activity in searching for and finding materials to manipulate.

Lately, I find that my observations are mostly of children's actions, hence it is the child-teacher relationship I am most conscious of. Especially this year in starting a new school again, I notice the children who have become overly dependent on adults, and their various strategies to cope with this dependency; i.e., the child who stops or starts working with the material depending on whether or not an adult is watching is very much more observable today than 10 years ago. There are a number of children who ask to be shown the materials and then leave when the teacher does. . . .

It has been interesting to watch how some of these children regain a sense of self direction when they get truly involved with a piece of material or activity. The older ones (5 year olds) don't generally do this. Although one boy of that age did "normalize" this year. He became totally concentrated in working with the short bead frame to the point of disregarding everything else in the environment for hours, for a week or more of school time. He was quite aggressive before and was even considered the school "bully" by some. Now no one even remembers that behavior.

REMINDER

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