



The Montessori

OBSERVER

Work

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Creating Peace

"... the cause of war does not lie in armaments, but in the men who make use of them."

Maria Montessori

from *Peace & Education* (1943), p.25

Current noteworthy efforts on behalf of world peace, focused primarily on such events as "summit talks" and nuclear disarmament negotiations, can readily distract one's attention away from the real work of creating peace—i.e., an individual and personal process of creative living which takes place every day in one's own immediate circumstances with others. The work of creating world peace is particularly alive in one's association with children as a true Montessori teacher.

Public attention to the activities of governments and superficial external events tends to distort the underlying reality of true peace which is not so much a goal to be attained, as it is rather a path to follow in the present moment. Such a path of peace emerges most significantly in one's daily Montessori teaching with children—to create "normalizing" environments wherein the child's true spirit of love, peace and harmony is free to express itself in the world. Ultimately, one's creative work in this regard extends itself outward in society as a process of expanding awareness of Dr. Montessori's "new education" which is gradually altering the destiny of all mankind.

Cultural exchanges and lip-service gestures on behalf of a "new education" and "world peace" are insufficient by themselves to successfully overcome the deepest levels of prejudice which dominate and repress the expression of the child's true spirit of love in the world. Such widespread prejudice and unconscious oppression of the child transcends culture and geographical location and thus underlies all human misery and social strife. A true beginning to successfully challenge these underlying oppressive circumstances in the world is found only within oneself. Montessori teaching is an effective path to world peace which begins with one's awareness of the three fundamental principles of nature upon which such teaching is based.

Creating peace through Montessori education is therefore a process of achieving inner spiritual mastery in one's own immediate circumstances and daily practical experience with children and others. To stand for the three Montessori principles of "Observation," "Individual Liberty" and "Preparation of the Environment" invariably challenges well-established forces of oppression and prejudice

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 2



Child working with practical life activity at the Montessori School of Rowland Heights (Rowland Heights, California)

Montessori in Rowland Heights, California

The Montessori School of Rowland Heights (Rowland Heights, California) serves an enrollment of about 150 children aged 2½-12. Full-day sessions are provided on a daily basis with extended care from 8:30 am to 6:30 pm.

Corazon C. Nedic is owner and administrator of this Society member school. Ms. Nedic holds a degree in education from the Far Eastern University in Manila, Philippines. Her teaching background includes some seven years of experience with one of the most respected schools in Manila. More recently, Ms. Nedic has lectured to groups of students from U.C.L.A. and Pepperdine University.

Special feature of the Rowland Heights

school includes art, music, parent education and a summer Montessori program. French and Spanish Language experience is also provided. In addition, Ms. Nedic recently announced the extension of her program to include children up to grade 8 at the junior high school level.

For further information, contact: Corazon C. Nedic, Montessori School of Rowland Heights, 18752 E Colima Rd., Rowland Heights, California 91748.

"Montessori" Bumper Stickers

Effective January 1, 1986, price for the unique "Montessori" bumper sticker offered by the Society will be \$2.00 each (quantities 1-9), \$1.00 each (quantities 10-50) and \$0.80 each (quantities over 50). Bumper stickers ordered prior to January 1, 1986 may be purchased at the current low rate of \$1.00 each (quantities 1-10) and \$0.60 each (quantities over 10).

The Society's attractive red and white "Montessori" bumper sticker is ideal for distribution to parents and staff to extend conscious awareness of "Montessori" into the general public. A "Montessori" bumper sticker will continue to be provided free to new and renewed Society members.

A Reminder . . .

Effective January 1, 1986, certain prices are being increased by the Society. Notably, membership with the Society as a "Montessori school" will be increased to \$60.00 for new and overdue expired member schools. (The current rate of \$45.00 will continue to apply for timely renewals of current members) In addition, tuition for the Society's Independent Study Course will be increased to \$900.00 on January 1, 1986. Enrollments completed prior to January 1, 1986 will be accepted at the current \$800.00 tuition rate. After January 1, 1986, the \$900.00 rate will apply.

Work

by Lee Haviv

"... the child can only develop fully by means of experience in his environment. We call such experience 'work'."

Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 88

Dr. Montessori observed that the normal experience and spontaneous movement of children in their environment was not that of random movement and general disorder oriented towards some fanciful purpose—i.e., "play". Rather, the normal child reveals an instinctive tendency to concentrate on real life tasks and otherwise to seriously engage in goal-directed intellectual activity. Accordingly, the child's natural inclination towards purposeful coordination and control of his movements is most properly seen as genuine "work". The Montessori "normalizing" environment therefore affords the child a true freedom to follow a directed line of reality-based activity which is always consistent with its own natural needs and interests.

Freedom to Work

"In the surroundings that we provide... excited fantasies and restless movements disappear and they calmly face reality and begin to perfect themselves through their work."

Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 156

Montessori teaching applies the principle of "Individual Liberty" with children to enable their free expression of true natural instincts for orderly, goal-directed activity. Ordinarily, such purposeful work in children is deterred by adult authority and supervision which labors under the mistaken belief that children need a certain amount of "play". Accordingly, children are often generally abandoned to their playful fantasies and thus become enslaved by the same prejudices and illusions with which adult society is likewise consumed and bound. Some types of well-intentioned "progressive" or "alternative" approaches to education even further deter the child's freedom to work by institutionalizing a condition of disorder and superficial "play" as somehow "natural" for learning and proper mental development.

Modern Education

"The attempts of so-called modern education which simply tries to deliver the child from presumed repression are not on the right path. To let the pupils do what they like, to amuse them with light occupations, to lead them back to a wild state, does not solve the problem."

Maria Montessori
from *The Formation of Man*, p. 19

Some so-called "modern" education based on learning through "play" tends essentially to ignore the underlying purposeful constructive nature of a child's spontaneous activity in the environment. "Work" in children is generally interpreted by traditional educators only in terms of that which is imposed by adult authority according to a pre-determined curriculum of specified subject matter. Even the most rigid traditional education recognizes a presumed

"need" for play in children by specifically providing the well-known "recess" period. During such "recess", however, the child is only delivered from one form of adult tyranny to be relegated to another. In truth, the child is generally "abandoned" by the adult during "recess" and thus falls prey to the dominating influence of its own wild fantasies and superficial sensations at such times.

Recess

"It is not a good thing to cut life in two, using the limbs for games and the head for books. Life should be a single whole, especially in the early years, when the child is forming himself in accordance with the laws of his growth."

Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 164

The typical "recess" in traditional schools is similarly practiced in many so-called "educational" programs for children under six years of age. Ordinarily, such "recess" emerges as an outdoor recreational period wherein physical exercise becomes the sole primary purpose. The children are thus generally abandoned to their own unguided frolic and whimsical random movement. Such adult abandonment thereby tends to separate physical movement from the child's developing inner order, thus considerably limiting its harmonious integration of being which necessarily must be accomplished through movement guided by intelligent thought and purpose.

Intelligent Movement

"A child that jumps about aimlessly and without restraint uses up his nervous energy, but intelligent movement which gives him an inner satisfaction and pride in having overcome himself increases his strength."

Maria Montessori
from *Discovery of the Child*, p. 308

Montessori teaching is always properly directed towards giving children opportunities for intelligent movement and experience. Such opportunities are as appropriate in the outdoor activity period as they are when the children are inside. Certainly, one's application of the principle of "Individual Liberty" would be limited indeed were children simply "abandoned" in the outdoor environment to randomly frolic, guided only by their superficial sensations and fanciful purposes. Whatever "games" there may be in Montessori education therefore necessarily incorporate intelligent mental direction and some definite aim to assure the child's opportunity for genuine purposeful work.

Games

"We speak, it is true of games in education, but it must be made clear that we understand by this term a free activity, ordered to a definite end; not disorderly noise, which distracts the attention."

Maria Montessori
from *Montessori Method*, p. 180

The "games" of Montessori education invariably intend that the child be guided in its physical exercise by some pre-determined intelligent goal and purpose—i.e., not merely

random movement or whimsical "play". Montessori "games" therefore generally entail some particular type of physical task requiring the child's exercise of intelligent choice and discernment to accomplish some specific aim. The child's movement in the Montessori environment is accordingly a true "work" in the service of its developing inner mental order and intelligence.

Serving the Intellect

"... work is refreshing and not tiring because of the interest which one takes in all his movements. It is natural exercise, since man ought to have some object in view when he moves. The muscles should always serve the intellect and thus preserve their functional unity with the human personality."

Maria Montessori
from *Discovery of the Child*, p. 81

Normal physical activity in the Montessori environment—i.e., "work"—invariably reflects some particular mental need for order or psychic development occurring unseen within the child. Such work appears in outer form only indirectly through the child's involvement with physical objects and interest in activity which emerges in the ordinary course of events. The

Cont'd. on Page 3, Col. 2

Look for the
**January
 Observer**
 featuring
Fantasy

The Montessori Observer
 published by
 INTERNATIONAL MONTESSORI SOCIETY
 912 Thayer Ave.
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 (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

November 8, 1985

Dear Lee,

I want you to know how much I appreciate your comments on my initial observation report. Never in my sixteen years of school has someone taken the time and effort to consider what I have said and to respond in such depth. Your action was an incarnation of the Montessori philosophy and the perfect foundation of trust upon which to begin my training. . . .

Sincerely,

Joan Miller
Anacortes, Washington

Ed. Note: Joan Miller is a student in the Society's Independent Study Course to prepare for Montessori teaching. Her comments relate to her first lesson entitled "Initial Observation Report."

October 30, 1985

Dear Sirs:

We are a national non-profit center established recently by parents. We are concerned with improving the conditions of learning disabled people through proper diagnosis and teaching. We cooperate with the Ministry of Education to establish programs and train teachers.

We are translating and norming tests and materials for an Arabic/English speaking population . . . people frequently contact us with questions regarding Montessori . . . We'd like to stay in touch with your organization. Please place our name on your mailing list.

Yours truly,

Evelyn Alayoub
Center for Child Evaluation and Teaching
Safat, Kuwait

November 5, 1985

Dear Sir:

Our school children have greatly enjoyed your MCP sets of books for the last few years. We urgently need another 40 books to help our children at school . . . Thank you.

Your Sincerely,

Bilquis Dairkee
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Ed. Note: MCP Primary Readers combine phonetically controlled vocabulary with simple stories to help children learn to read. Four sets of ten books each. Available from Society at \$8.92 per set. The four set series is \$39.18 total prepaid.

November 1985

To IMS:

A friend passed a copy of your newsletter on to me, and I'd be interested in being on your mailing list. Our Child Development students are always interested in the Montessori approach, and you seem to reflect the philosophy rather than the use of equipment. I'd like to share that in my classes.

Dorothy Hewes, Ph.D.
(Professor, Child Development)
School of Family Studies
San Diego State University

November

Hello,

Can you please mail me information concerning subscription information about the "Montessori News"? I would like to receive this newsletter.

Also, I am currently enrolled in a teacher training course . . . I also work as a teacher's aide. Do you have any information . . . concerning maintaining classroom order? I would greatly appreciate any "how to" information available . . .

Sincerely,

Amaya Ball
Fullerton, California

Ed. Note: "Managing misbehavior" is one of the areas especially emphasized in the Society's preparation course for Montessori teaching. However, a brief introduction to "managing misbehavior" is contained in an "Observer" re-print and available upon request. Send \$1.00 to Society with request for this title.

Work

Cont'd. from Page 2, Col. 3

teacher's application of the principle of "Preparation of the Environment" in this regard assures the child can freely choose to work according to its own interests at any given time. The teacher therefore constantly prepares a responsive and inviting organization for the child's spontaneous work in the environment.

Organization for Work

"Freedom without organization of work would be useless. The child left free without means of work would go to waste . . ."

Maria Montessori
from Dr. Montessori's Own Handbook, p. 188

A well-organized environment of orderly physical objects enables the child to exercise intelligent choice in its physical movements. The child is therefore able to follow a directed line of interest, discovery and concentration. Notably, the central event of "normalization" emerges in due course with the child's deep concentration on some simple piece of work. After such "normalization", the environment's organization for work provides a proper climate for the child's further intellectual work which enables the child to acquire a great quantity of concepts and cultural knowledge based on its own unique interests and needs as they spontaneously arise in this regard.

Intellectual Work

"children free in this new kind of environment . . . can work for long periods without fatigue. As a result, their minds seem to open out and they become eager for knowledge."

Maria Montessori
from Absorbent Mind, p. 171

The "normalized" child in the Montessori environment demonstrates an expansive intellectual life which becomes insatiable in its search for knowledge. The "teacher within" the child consistently guides the child towards greater mental conquests and harmonious personality integration with its environment which far transcends that which might otherwise be expected. The child's intellectual work thus assumes the level of genius wherein interest in fantasy and "play" gradually disappears entirely. Remarkable qualities of inner character, dignity and self-discipline also emerge as a corresponding result of the child's normal work in the environment.

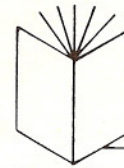
Discipline

"Discipline is therefore attained indirectly, that is, by developing activity in spontaneous work."

Maria Montessori
from Discovery of the Child, p. 305

The child's work with physical objects extends its impact far beyond the domain of mere acquisition of academic knowledge and a refined coordination and control of physical movement to engender an inner quality of profound self-discipline. The child thus becomes more able to effectively function with confidence, harmony and independence in society. However, such profound changes within the child are not readily seen by the adult as connected with the child's immediate physical activity. The typical adult, blinded by one's

Cont'd on Page 4, Col. 1



Book Review

The Computer and the Child —A Montessori Approach

By: Peter G. Gebhardt-Seele

Publ. By: Computer Science Press, 1985

"Our care of the child should be governed, not by the desire 'to make him learn things' but by the endeavor always to keep burning within him that light that is called the intelligence."

Maria Montessori
from Absorbent Mind, P.200

The undeniably expanding use of computers in education - and in every facet of modern life - calls striking attention to their possible introduction and use with children in the Montessori environment. "The Computer and the Child" is a most scholarly effort to penetrate below the superficial utility of computers to "instruct" children in a traditional setting to consider what, if any, utility and purpose the computer has for children in a Montessori environment.

Mr. Gebhardt-Seele, author of *Computer*, offers less than an enthusiastic endorsement of the value of the computer in the Montessori environment, particularly for children under the age of six where he states "there are important considerations not to include it." (The Society likewise has cautioned against the use of computer hardware in the Montessori environment. See *Montessori Observer*, Vol. IV, No. 6, September, 1983 in article entitled "The Danger of Computers.")

Nevertheless, computer introduction and instruction with children is growing in schools. The author cites a 1982 study which indicates that some 15,000 elementary and secondary schools in the United States at that time were using computers to fulfill some aspect of the traditional teaching function. *Computer* suggests that such proliferation of computer usage in traditional education may serve at least one beneficial purpose if it is only "to demonstrate beyond all possible doubt the mechanical character of the schoolmaster's function as it is conceived by traditional teaching methods" to "elicit correct repetition of what has been correctly transmitted." (*Computer*, p.19)

Although use of computers in Montessori education is clearly questioned, Mr. Gebhardt-Seele presents an argument for their modest introduction to the 6-12 year old child - to enhance the elementary child's exploration and inquiry into physical laws of nature and mathematical operations and to afford a basic "literacy" of this technology which promises to so dominate society for the foreseeable future. The author also suggests a certain practical utility of the computer in the learning of certain mechanical-type skills, such as typing, grammar, spelling and word processing.

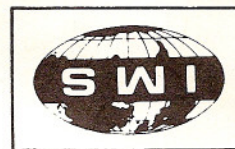
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Work

Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 2

own perception of "work" to change some external condition, tends to disregard the child's deeper inner purpose implicated by its external activity—i.e., to create its own being and identity in the world.

The Child's Work

"A child's labor is far different from and, we might say, even opposed to that of an adult. It is an unconscious labor . . . of man being created."

Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 193-94

Adults generally fail to recognize the child's work as entirely different in nature and purpose from that of the adult. Unlike the adult, the child does not work merely to accomplish some external change to the environment. Rather, a child's way of working with some exercise or activity may appear quite wasteful of energy and needlessly repetitious from the adult point of view. Nevertheless, the child's work follows an inner guide and purpose, whose results in the world touches the most vital well-being and future of humanity. Such work is creating the child's own being in the world according to natural instincts set in motion through biological imperatives given at the moment of conception.

Instinct to Work

"The child has an instinct to co-ordinate his movements and to bring them under control."

Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 180

A child's natural instinct and inclination to harmoniously integrate its personality expression with the environment is realized primarily as a process of co-ordination and control of physical movement through concentrated work with physical objects. Such an instinct to work therefore reflects the child's fundamental tendencies in life to express its being and explore the environment according to mysterious inner dictates given by the plan of creation. The "normalized" child thus emerges as indeed a great worker creating a new and better humanity.

The Great Worker

" . . . the child is a great worker . . . who can learn by himself, teach himself and who possesses discipline within himself . . . No attention is paid to this reality . . . "

Maria Montessori
from *The Formation of Man*, p. 66

The child's great work of creating a new humanity is not readily perceived in its humble, modest, external movements and activity. Nevertheless, the child is a great worker building the very spirit for mankind to resolve the deepest and most troubling problems in the world today. One's complete commitment to the three Montessori principles; i.e., (1) "Observation"; (2) "Individual Liberty"; and (3) "Preparation of the Environment", is the type of adult being which frees the child to reveal its great work on behalf of expanding joy, peace and harmony for all mankind.

Creating Peace

Cont'd from Page 1, Col. 1

with which one's own personality has become detrimentally associated since early childhood. Being a Montessori teacher—as opposed to being one's "personality"—necessarily engenders the experience of painful feelings, such as tension, anger, fear, helplessness and embarrassment from time to time. In the face of a child's misbehavior, pressure from parents and associates for external "results" or the dictatorial impositions of government officials under the guise of "regulation," the experience of Montessori teaching can readily emerge as feelings of discouragement, defeat and failure.

To stand alone as a commitment to Montessori principles on behalf of the "normalized" child—amid an array of awesomely hostile oppressive forces and detrimental reactive tendencies—requires a profound courage, patience and determination. The extent of one's faithful being as a true Montessori teacher is an accurate measure of one's ability to effectively engage in the real work of creating peace in the world.

Computer and Child

Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 3

Computer specifically provides a most exacting sequence of presentations to lead the child through a process of mastery of basic computer programing. A series of cards are employed to enable the child to visualize and simulate the various computer functions. The materials emphasize the child's own self-correction and instruction; however a considerable amount of teacher guidance through specific lesson presentations is nonetheless involved.

In response to Mr. Gebhardt-Seele's argument for computer awareness in the 6-12 Montessori elementary environment, one is compelled to caution judgment with regard to the foremost concern for the child's own independent discovery, interest and creative exploration of culture. Today's society abounds with complex machinery and technology which one routinely employs for useful purposes without any particular depth of knowledge as to "how it works." Certainly, one does not have to be an electrical engineer to turn on a television set or replace a light bulb. The child's own interest should therefore provide the essential guiding basis for introduction of any specific materials in the Montessori environment—including the "high tech" type of material associated with computer hardware. The child's interest—not that of the teacher or some perceived "need" in society—is always foremost in a Montessori environment, and this applies equally as well with the elementary (6-12) child as it does with the child under six.

"*The Computer and the Child*" examines a field of technology and human experience which merits the respectful attention of all. Where appropriate, such technology can certainly be intelligently presented to children in a Montessori environment without engendering undue dependence on the adult presence to direct or guide the child's own independent learning. Mr. Gebhardt-Seele has certainly contributed to such a constructive purpose in "*The Computer and the Child*."