



The Montessori

# OBSERVER

Language

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Children working at the Chiaravalle Montessori School (Evanston, Illinois)

## Chiaravalle Montessori in Evanston, Illinois

The Chiaravalle Montessori School (Evanston, Illinois) was established in 1965 as a not-for-profit school governed by a Board of Directors elected from the parent body. This Society member Montessori school provides a wide range of full and half-day programs for its enrollment of over 300 children from 11 months to 11 years of age.

The school facilities are located in a building whose resources include a gymnasium, a computer lab, a 1,400 volume young children's library, and a kitchen and dining facilities. An adjacent public park and playing field are available for outdoor activity. The school is located near downtown Evanston and Lake Michigan.

Directed by Louise Kunert, the Chiaravalle school features a variety of enrollment programs which are incorporated into the total Montessori environment. Such programs as Gym, Creative Movement, Art, Music, French and Creative Dramatics are interwoven into the school operation "to reinforce and build on the basic curricula, to help children discover and develop special talents, to let them reach new levels of self-confidence." A special after-school care program is also provided for elementary aged children who stay from 3-6 pm on school days. Children from other area elementary schools are also invited to participate in this program as well.

Since the 1974-75 school year, the Chiaravalle school has enrolled children with special needs in regular classrooms. Such "mainstreaming" of special children tends to benefit all children to reduce prejudice and enhance understanding of individual differences. Children thereby have the opportunity to learn to be more helpful, caring and sensitive towards others.

For more information, contact: Louise Kunert, Chiaravalle Montessori School, 425 Dempster St., Evanston, IL 60201, Tel. (312) 864-2190.

## New Education in Texas

On March 7-8, 1987, parents, teachers and school owners from the states of Texas and Louisiana met in Dallas, Texas to continue the work of "creating the new education" in that area of the United States. Conducted by Lee Havis, Society executive director, the Dallas conference focussed primarily on the resolution of "misbehavior" in children according to the approach of "control the environment, not the child." The issue of "fantasy" arose for particular consideration.

One of the participants of the Society's Dallas conference, Norma Morris, is planning a

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## Society Supports Inclusive Accreditation

Since the Society's accreditation of its own Montessori teacher training does not include the many non-Society training programs which exist in the Montessori community, the creation of an inclusive "umbrella" accreditation agency for the *entire* Montessori community has been a long-term Society goal. Such an *inclusive* accreditation agency would provide a useful basis for regular communication and constructive collaboration to resolve differences and otherwise to enhance the integrity and ethical operation of *all* Montessori teacher training.

The proposed *inclusive* Montessori accrediting agency would seek "recognition" from the United States Office of Education according to criteria which clearly indicate that only one such agency will be "recognized" as such. Accordingly, it is vital that the single "recognized" agency includes effective participation from throughout the *entire* Montessori community.

On March 12, 1987, the Society formally expressed its opposition to a petition for official

*Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 2*

## Montessori Conferences

**International Montessori Society Conference** entitled "Creating the New Education." Lee Havis, speaker and discussion leader on Montessori teaching. Specific content based on interest of those attending; includes analysis of misbehavior scenarios according to approach of "control the environment, not the child." Prepaid registration, \$150 per person (\$120 for Society members).

**May 16-17, 1987 . . . Detroit, Michigan**

**August 8-9, 1987 . . . Columbia, South Carolina**

Send registration fee to: IMS, 912 Thayer Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20910, Tel. (301) 589-1127.

**June 13-14, 1987.** in Rockwall, Texas, a conference sponsored by Country Day Montessori School. "Creating the New Education" conducted by Lee Havis. Prepaid registration, \$50 per person (\$60 per person after May 15, 1987). Send registration fee to: Norma Morris, Country Day Montessori School, 2305 Plaza Dr., Rockwall, Texas 75087. Tel. (214) 722-6680.



# Language

by Lee Havis

*"language . . . is the central point of difference between the human species and all others. Language lies at the root of that transformation of the environment we call civilization."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 108

The power of language to creatively "transform" the environment is ordinarily overlooked amid its pervasive presence and thoughtless usage in everyday experience. Emerging reactively to reflect a constant stream of random thoughts and feelings, language generally tends to unconsciously limit reality according to conditions and circumstances of the past. While language may be employed to creatively engender a new reality of being in the present moment, its more common appearance is as that of a restrictive barrier to isolate and separate persons from harmonious social interaction.

## Language Barrier

*" . . . language is a kind of wall that encloses a given human company and separates it from all others."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 109

By limiting the definition and interpretation of words, language typically represents more a barrier than a help to effective communication. Intimately interwoven into the fabric of one's defensive being as "personality," the essential structure of such language is unconsciously absorbed within oneself for life during the formative period from birth to about the age of six.

## Absorbing Language

*"It is the child who 'absorbs' language. The reality of this absorption is something deep and puzzling."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 110

From birth, the child's "absorbent mind" mysteriously incorporates within itself environmental experience so that a fundamental inner order is gradually formed. Such order distinguishes random noise from that of human language according to the speech of adults immediately present in the child's environment. Through this process of absorbing language, meaningful speech emerges in the normal child by about the age of two.

## Speech

*"It is during this period (0-3) that speech naturally develops, making its first appearance when a child is about two years old."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 110

After acquiring the ability to speak, the process of absorbing language proceeds further to

its more symbolic form—i.e., reading and writing. Being in a particularly "sensitive period" for absorbing language, the young child prior to the age of about six is uniquely able to easily develop a genuine proficiency in reading and writing. After six, the learning of basic reading and writing emerges only with considerable effort—often as the child's "first torment" when it enters the traditional first grade classroom.

## The First Torment

*" . . . reading and writing is the first obstacle in school, the first torment experienced by a man who must subject his own nature to the demands of civilization."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Discovery of the Child*, p. 185

Lacking an "absorbent mind" and "sensitive period" for language acquisition, the child over six learns to read and write only with difficulty—perhaps involving the added indignity of diminished self-image and lack of confidence due to "learning difficulties." In traditional education, the teacher's own verbal expression, interpretation and explanation may well further deter the child's own individual path of natural language development.

## Traditional Teaching

*"However much you speak and speak and speak, you accomplish nothing, because the child cannot take directly but only indirectly. This is the teaching of the child."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Reconstruction in Ed.*, p. 10

Based on the external demands of a group-oriented curriculum, the traditional teaching of reading and writing tends to work against the child's natural process of independent learning. By contrast, Montessori teaching follows the path of learning given by the child's own spontaneous needs and interests. In a Montessori environment, the normal child would master basic reading and writing during its sensitive period for language prior to the age of about six.

## Writing

*"almost all of the normal children treated with our method begin to write at four years, and at five know how to read and write."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Montessori Method*, p. 303

The Montessori teacher helps the child to indirectly prepare for writing by providing a variety of opportunities for goal-directed activity which exercise the child's hand. This indirect preparation finally emerges as spontaneous writing at about four years of age. Thereafter, the child's further interest in language development leads naturally to the phenomenon of reading.

## Reading

*" . . . the teaching of reading is begun simultaneously with that of writing . . . a little child will write before he reads, whereas a child who is already too far developed (five or six years of age) will read first."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Discovery of the Child*, p. 215

The child's begins to read with the simple discovery that "letters make sounds" and "sounds placed together make words." This important key to reading enables the child thereafter to attain rapid progress with substantial independence. The child is assisted in this self-directed process of learning to read by having the rules of written language which are represented generally according to the "phonetic method."

## Phonetic Method

*" . . . letters of the alphabet . . . are pronounced according to their sound and not their name. A sound is immediately united with a word, and the syllables are pronounced according to the well-known phonetic method."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Discovery of the Child*, p. 211

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Lee Havis, Executive Director

The *Montessori Observer* is mailed six times each year to Society members throughout the world. The *Observer* is sent during the months of January, March, May, September, October and November. The purpose of this publication is to provide news and information about the development of Montessori education to extend awareness of Montessori principles and to 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 Society's purpose is to support the effective application of Montessori principles throughout the world.

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**ADVERTISING**  
Advertising space is available for services and products relating to Montessori education. Marketplace ads are \$7/line. Position and Placement ads are \$10 each and will be set and edited by the Society to conform to space requirements. Write for the Society's advertising outline as to rates and other information about design advertising.

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## LETTERS TO IMS

March, 1987

Dear Lee,

Just a note to say how much I enjoyed the "Managing Misbehavior" seminar, March 7th and 8th . . .

Understanding the true essence of the Montessori Method of Education has enabled me to put meaning to the materials—a "rightness" that I knew must exist, but until now, had no means by which to attain it. I will be ever grateful that you have chosen to spread this knowledge.

Sincerely,

Norma Morris  
Rockwall, Texas

*Ed. Note: Norma Morris, director of the Country Day Montessori School (Rockwall, Texas) refers to her experience of attending the Society's conference "Creating the New Education" held in Dallas, Texas on March 7-8, 1987. Her school is sponsoring another similar conference in Rockwall, Texas on June 13-14, 1987.*

March, 1987

Mr. Havis,

Every day I am able to put to use some of the things I have learned in your course. I am very grateful for all the help you have provided for me these last two years.

Just yesterday there was a small boy aged 2½ years who was causing quite a lot of noise by pushing a chair across the tiled floor. I have noticed if he is angry he likes to kick a chair or knock chairs over. My first reaction was to take the chair away from him and put it under the table.

However, I remembered what you taught me and I said the three principles to myself. I invited the child to put the chair away and he continued to push the chair and make noise. I held the chair securely down, the child struggled to move the chair and when he looked at me I asked him if he would like to put the chair back under the table. He smiled and said yes. And he did put the chair back.

Every week the teachers and I are able to work quietly with the children putting to use the knowledge you have given me in your course. We all thank you.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Smith  
Baytown, Texas

*Ed. Note: Carolyn Smith is a student in the Society's Montessori teacher training program. She relates here an incident with a child resulting from her experience in the program.*

## New Education

*Cont'd from Page 1, Col. 2*

further opportunity to continue progress of the "new education" realized recently at the Dallas conference. Scheduled for June 13-14, 1987, this next Texas conference will be held in Rockwall, Texas under the direction of Lee Havis—offering a similar format of expanding awareness of Montessori principles and resolution of practical teaching problems as given in Dallas on March 7-8, 1987.

The Rockwall conference will be sponsored by the Country Day Montessori School and is open to the general public at a very low registration fee of \$50 per person (\$60 per person, after May 15, 1987). The low registration fee intends to extend the opportunity for participation to as many persons as possible.

On the evening of Friday, June 12, 1987, a special meeting of those who attended the Dallas conference will be held at the school to share personal and practical experiences emerging from that prior conference. To register for the June 13-14, 1987 conference in Rockwall, Texas, send fee of \$50 per person (\$60 per person after May 15, 1987) to: Norma Morris, Country Day Montessori School, 2305 Plaza Dr., Rockwall, Texas 75087, Tel. (214) 722-6680.

## Language

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With letter-sound awareness, the child gradually perfects its basic ability to read. Simple phonetic readers and other such phonetic devices help children to proceed with even greater ease and independence in the learning process—with very little, if any, direct personal guidance or assistance from the teacher.

## Teaching Reading

*"Once . . . children grasp the principle that each sound of the spoken language can be represented by a symbol, they advance on their own."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Discovery of the Child*, p. 218

In comparison with the ordinary teaching of reading, Montessori education diminishes considerably the direct instructional role of the adult teacher. Children in a Montessori environment essentially teach themselves to read—guided by their own individual interests and exploration of the environment with the other children. The Montessori teacher generally employs very little direct verbal instruction, practicing more a presence of silent observation.

## Silence

*" . . . a new type of mistress has been evolved; instead of facility in speech, she has to acquire the power of silence. . . ."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Spontaneous Act*. in *Ed.*, p. 128

Montessori teaching most commonly reflects that of being a silent, passive "observation" of children—rather than the more commonly "active" adult role associated with traditional instruction. Distinct from being as one's "personality," the true Montessori teacher is more completely identified as being a commitment to three fundamental principles of nature: (1) "Observation"; (2) "Individual Liberty"; and (3) "Preparation of the Environment." Such committed being is generally absent the customary verbal "explanations" offered in the lesson presentation of the typical teacher.

## Lesson Presentation

*"Let thy words be counted.' The more carefully we cut away useless words, the more perfect will become the lesson."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Montessori Method*, p. 108

Brief and simple, the Montessori "lesson" is characterized as any adult-child interaction; perhaps nothing more substantial than a momentary eye contact from across the room. Words such as "watch" replace lengthy verbal explanations to direct the child's momentary attention to some brief hand motion or movement associated with a particular piece of equipment. Even words which seem "important" to explain some work may well prove unnecessary and distracting from the child's primary focus of attention on the material itself.

Vocabulary related to material is ordinarily introduced only *after* the child has become familiar with the material through extensive sensorial experience.

## Vocabulary

*"a teacher . . . intervenes to enlighten a child who has already succeeded in distinguishing differences through his own spontaneous efforts. It is then that she can . . . provide him with words to describe the differences he has perceived."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Discovery of the Child*, p. 152

The "vocabulary" to define and distinguish the child's environment is offered by the Montessori teacher only with the greatest delicacy and precision. No terms are offered during a lesson that would distract the child away from its own immediate sensorial experience. Phrases such as "I have *something* to show you" and "would you like to do the *next one*?" effectively avoid the undue imposition of distracting descriptive vocabulary. Recognizing one's reactive tendency towards distracting verbal expression, the effective Montessori teacher measures very carefully the purpose and value of each word given. The power of words is particularly evident as a first impression and adaptive influence on the child during the formative period from birth to about the age of six.

## Power of Words

*"the word" . . . is something that unites men even more closely than nationality. Words are bonds between men."*

Maria Montessori  
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 109

The great power and effect of words on children is a matter of constant attention to the effective Montessori teacher. As words may thoughtlessly implicate a child as somehow "limited" or "bad," they may also vitalize and confirm the expansive reality of infinite love and truth. By merely saying the three phrases "Observation," "Individual Liberty" and "Preparation of the Environment," one begins to engender being as "commitment to Montessori principles." Such creative use of language ultimately reveals its power to transform reality through the emergence of the child's true nature in complete harmony, peace and love with its entire environment.

## Marketplace

**Montessori Equipment:** excellent quality at moderate prices. Made by: Educational Aids, Ltd. Stock on hand for prompt shipment. For free brochure and price list, write: CABDEV, Incorporated, 1183A Finch Ave. W, Unit 3, Downsview, Ontario M3J 2G2 Canada, Tel. (416) 665-8310. (Exclusive agents and distributors, U.S.A. and Canada. Montessori distributors since 1972)

**MONTESSORI SCHOOL** in the Tampa, Florida area is looking for a new owner. This is a complete turn key operation including Land, Building, and Equipment. For information, contact Eulanda Sumner, Solid Gold Properties, III, Inc. Hometrend 1-800-221-7653 or 813-985-5565.

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## Positions & Placements

**Montessori Teacher:** (3-6). For Fall, 1987. Half day or extended day. School is well-established, over 20 years old. New building, waiting list. Send letter of application, resume and references to Staff Search Committee, Montessori School of Champaign-Urbana; 1403 Regency Dr., Savoy, IL 61874.

**Montessori Teacher:** (3-6). Experienced. Positions as supervisor and co-teacher available now. \$1,500—\$2,000 per mo (Canadian currency) with full benefit package. Salaries negotiable. Telephone or send resume to: Penny Shick, 2091 W. 8th Ave., Vancouver, British Columbia, V6J 1W4. Tel.: 604-731-6917 (days at the centre) or 604-435-9579 (evenings).

**Montessori Teacher:** (6-9). Training background at 3-6 level with plans for 6-9 training. For expanding elementary program. Contact: Sr. Deanna Randall, Montessori Child Development Center, 400 So. Logan St., Denver, CO 80209, Tel. (303) 722-7708.

**Montessori Teachers:** (3-6). Full or part time positions for September, 1987. Schools are located in South Florida area near beaches, shopping, colleges and museums. Send resume to: Summit Private School, 1725 Davie Blvd., Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33312. Call Judy Dempsey, (305) 523-9489.

**Montessori Teacher:** (6-9). For 87-88 year. School is well established, located in southeastern suburb of Michigan. Send resume and list of references: Personnel, Oak Montessori Center, 30303 Shoreham Dr., Southfield, MI 48076.

**Montessori Teacher:** (6-9). For private school (pre-k to 6th grade) in Northern California; 45 miles north of San Francisco. experienced; credential preferred. Resume to: Vintage Country Day School, P.O. Box 1514, Sonoma, CA 95476, Tel. 707-996-6560.

### Mere Speculations

*"When man loses himself in mere speculations, 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 Act.* in Ed., p. 241

### Accreditation

Cont'd from Page 1, Col. 3

government "recognition" submitted by the agency entitled the *Accreditation Council for Childhood Education Specialist Schools (ACCESS)*. The Society's opposition to ACCESS recognition is based on the exclusionary nature of its Montessori accreditation criteria which specifically limits academic content, style, approach and faculty personnel to that which is distinctively favorable to the training programs associated with the *American Montessori Society (AMS)*. Montessori teacher training of the *International Montessori Society* and other non-AMS Montessori training would be clearly precluded from effective participation.

The issue of "recognized" accreditation is important because government regulatory boards and agencies at both the state and federal levels tend to rely considerably on such "recognized" status to limit, restrict and otherwise control the hiring and employment of teaching staff at many private schools and day care centers. Non-ACCESS Montessori teacher training programs would face an unfair discrimination in their effective operation by restricting the ability of their students to receive federal financial assistance and by limiting their program graduates from their chosen career as Montessori teachers.

ACCESS recognition would therefore essentially serve to institutionalize one single limited brand of "Montessori" to the detriment of a healthy competition, diversity of expression and freedom of choice among the full spectrum of Montessori teacher training programs available.

The Society is scheduled to present written and oral testimony on behalf of its position in opposition to the ACCESS petition at the official public hearing to be held in Silver Spring, Maryland on May 18-19, 1987. Contact the Society for further details, or otherwise direct comments on the ACCESS petition to: Dr. Leslie Ross, Agency Evaluation Staff, U.S. Department of Education, 7th and D St. S.W., Washington, D.C. 20202.

### Reflections

by Bonnie Sanders  
(Beaufort, South Carolina)

Bonnie Sanders is a student in the Society's Montessori teacher training program.

#### Justice among Friends

David and his 6-year-old friend, Chris, had spent the afternoon digging for fiddler crabs, which they usually keep a day or so before returning to the marsh. After they had peacefully divided the crabs between themselves, it was time for Chris to go home. Suddenly, David stated that he wanted all the fiddler crabs. Chris was understandably upset, so I told him that he could, of course, take his share home with him. But, now David was upset. All my chatter about fairness meant absolutely nothing to him. In fact, he acted as though I had been the unfair one.

David announced that he was going to call Chris' mother and tell her to make Chris bring the crabs back. As he was dialing, I thought that I should stop him. (What would Chris' mother think of me, if I allowed David to do such a thing?)

But I didn't stop him. In a few minutes, Chris came back with the fiddler crabs and with tears in his eyes. I thought how unfair this was to Chris; but at that moment in time, I decided to let each child feel the consequences of their "little drama"—whatever those consequences would turn out to be.

I said and did nothing.

David now possessed all the fiddler crabs. When Chris was almost out of the door, David called to him. Chris came back into the room, and, to my utter surprise, David joyfully said, "Here, you can have them all."

There was happiness and peace in David's face. A special calmness seemed to emanate from him for the rest of the night. I am not sure it has left him yet. I was so touched, so moved by this wonder. I wanted to thank David and Chris for giving me my most valuable lesson yet in Montessori teaching.