



The Montessori OBSERVER

Character

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New Education Conferences in Wisconsin and South Carolina

In August, 1988, the Society held its latest "Creating the New Education" conferences in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (August 6-7, 1988) and Greenville, South Carolina (August 13-14, 1988). Conducted by Lee Havis, the Society's executive director, these two-day weekend events continue the Society's series of similar conferences held elsewhere throughout the United States since 1986—to expand awareness of Montessori principles in the resolution of practical teaching problems with children according to the idea of "control the environment, not the child".

The Milwaukee, Wisconsin conference included the participation of teachers, parents and school owners from the states of Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Massachusetts, Texas and Indiana. Further similar conferences in the midwest region of the United States will be coordinated by various persons who attended the Milwaukee conference: Peoria, Illinois, November 19-20, 1988 (Pat Meredith, coordinator, Tel. (309) 688-0099); Warren, Michigan, January 28-29, 1989 (Georgette Jacob, coordinator, Tel. (313) 548-9495).

Montessori Conferences

Creating the New Education

Peoria, Illinois
November 19-20, 1988

Warren, Michigan
January 28-29, 1989

Atlanta, Georgia
February 25-26, 1989

Pre-paid registration for the full two-day conference is \$150 per person (\$120 for Society members). The payment due date is four (4) weeks before the scheduled date of the conference. A late fee of \$50 applies for registrations submitted after the payment due date.

Send registration fee to: International Montessori Society, 912 Thayer Ave., Silver Spring, Maryland 20910 Tel. (301) 589-1127.

Attending the Greenville, South Carolina conference were Montessori practitioners and other interested persons from the states of South Carolina and Georgia. In South Carolina, Montessori educators have organized a "South Carolina Conference of Montessori Educators" (SCCME) to meet together more frequently throughout the year to support regular discussion and association to help each other in applying Montessori principles with children.

The Society schedules its conferences according to the specific interest expressed for attendance in the local area. Contact the Society or its specific conference coordinators to register or to obtain more information.

IMS Teaching Credential Recognized in Texas

In August, 1988, the Texas Department of Human Services awarded official recognition to the Society's credential for Montessori teacher education in that state. The Society's recognized "administrator's credential" will help meet pertinent personnel requirements to qualify directors of Montessori schools under that state's regulations.

The new recognized credential will be issued to all graduates of the Society's 22-lesson Montessori teacher education program "Independent Study Course" and will be valid for a three-year renewable term. Renewal of the credential is based on completion of thirty hours of Society-approved coursework during the preceding three-year period.

Lee Havis, the Society's executive director, stated that attendance at the Society's "Creating the New Education" conference will qualify as suitable Society-approved coursework. Since 1986, five such conferences have been held in the state of Texas. Havis stated that "the credential's requirement for continuing education will support the Society's own similar purpose in Montessori teacher education—to encourage further preparation and professional association with others throughout one's entire career." Qualified prior graduates of the Society's Montessori teacher education program may contact the Society for issuance of the new recognized credential.



Participants meeting during lunch at the Society's "Creating the New Education" conference held on August 13-14, 1988. (Greenville, South Carolina)

Society Selects New Office Staff

In June, 1988, the Society named Alethea Farzad (IMS '87) to serve as its full-time assistant director to provide general management for the Society's office operation in Silver Spring, Maryland. Active in Montessori education as a student in the Society's Montessori teacher education program since March, 1985 and after graduation in 1987 as a part-time Society employee, Ms. Farzad will contribute her considerable skill, energy and experience to supervise the Society's general office activities, including membership correspondence and publication services. In addition, she will function to expand membership participation and to assure greater coordination of other Society activities, such as the operation of its conference *Creating the New Education*.

A graduate in International Cultural Studies from Illinois Wesleyan University (Bloomington, IL), Ms. Farzad lived in Europe as a child and is conversant in German and acquainted with several other languages. Her practical experience in Montessori teaching includes the establishment and direction of a Montessori program for the "Lab School" institution in Washington, D.C. in 1987. She has also attended five Montessori conferences conducted by the Society throughout the United States and has provided other important Montessori consultation in close association with Lee Havis, the Society's executive director. Most recently, Ms. Farzad represented the Society in the proceedings for an umbrella accreditation agency for Montessori teacher education programs held in Irvine, CA on August 5-7, 1988.



Character

by Lee Havis

"By character we mean the behavior of men driven (though often unconsciously) to make progress"

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 213

Dr. Montessori recognized man's character as the foremost underlying aspect of the human personality which moves forward the basic progress of civilization in accordance with the evolutionary plan of creation. In education, the limitation of such character development is therefore a primary obstacle in helping children to solve their basic problems of learning and behavior. Despite such limitations, Dr. Montessori's study of the normal development of children has confirmed the reality of character within all as a profound desire and tendency to progress.

Tendency to Progress

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

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 209

Beyond the obvious superficial differences of personality which exist among individuals and cultures throughout the world, man's character is evident in one's persistent tendency to progress beyond the obstacles and limitations with which daily life is ordinarily associated. However well hidden and unconscious, this inner tendency to progress is nonetheless creatively active even in circumstances of considerable discouragement and personal tragedy wherein the individual appears as substantially vanquished and enslaved.

Vanquished and Enslaved

"Today mankind is vanquished and enslaved by its own environment because it has remained weak in comparison with that environment."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 15

The underlying character of humanity as relatively weak and dependent is played out in the world by each individual as the unfolding struggle for life against overwhelming detrimental forces in the environment. This dramatic struggle is outwardly apparent in such widespread social conditions as poverty, crime and violence—conditions which detrimentally persist in society despite the common pretense of one's own personal "freedom" and "independence." Many ordinary defects of character may not even be recognized as such, but rather may be seen more as positive "virtues" in the nature of "politeness" or "necessity." Such subtle character flaws are usually overlooked amid their widespread acceptance by popular public opinion.

Public Opinion

" . . . defects of character . . . are not always regarded as bad by public opinion. Some are even valued. Passive children are thought to be good. Noisy and exuberant children with vivid imaginations are thought to be spiritually brilliant."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 201

Public opinion tends to view "character" from the prejudicial outlook of reality as confined within some particular limited history and culture. The more expansive creative purpose and possibility of man's true character is therefore undervalued or completely ignored. The "inferior" view of human possibility is therefore ordinarily continued into future generations by its unconscious communication to children in the form of traditional education.

Traditional Education

"The education of today is humiliating. It produces an inferiority complex and artificially lowers the powers of man . . . It supplies men with crutches when they could run on swift feet . . ."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 214

Dominated by the prevailing prejudicial judgments and perception of adult society, traditional education assumes a fundamental weakness in man's character wherein the imposition of repressive restraints and limitations on the child's spontaneous normal development is routinely justified as necessary. Within such a restrictive traditional system of control and domination, the child's character is essentially limited in its development according to the expectations and prejudices of superficial public opinion. By contrast, Dr. Montessori envisioned a natural development of character based on the adult's non-prejudicial being with children—an approach which she identified as the "new education."

New Education

" . . . if character were allowed its natural way of formation, and if we gave not moral dissertations but the chance to act constructively, then the world would need a very different kind of education."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 214

Dr. Montessori's "new education" approaches the child as an "unknown entity" so that its character can develop spontaneously through its own natural self-creative activities. Montessori teaching therefore extends far beyond the ordinary limiting prejudices of adult society—to reflect a new being of thought and action which is consistently centered on absolute and infinite natural laws.

Natural Laws

"There are natural laws which guide growth and formation, and the individual must follow these laws if he is to build up his character . . ."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 218

Montessori education supports the normal development of the child's character by following three specific natural laws; i.e., (1) "Observation"; (2) "Individual Liberty"; and (3) "Preparation of the Environment". These three Montessori principles are most vitally applied for character development with the child under the age of six when the human personality is undergoing its essential permanent formation for life. During this sensitive early childhood period, basic character is formed as a fundamental adaptation to the child's entire environment.

Adaptation

"Adaptation to the world about one occurs in the first six years. Here then are to be found the origins of character."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 210

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Look for the

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featuring

Progress

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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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SUBSCRIPTION
Subscription to this *Observer* publication may be obtained by requesting Society membership which is open to all individuals for a \$15 annual fee. Society members also receive a subscription to the *Montessori News*. Send request for membership benefits.

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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July, 1988

To Lee Havis:

I am indeed fortunate that I have taken this course (Society's Montessori teacher education program). I see my life evolving as never before. It is a lesson in life as well as preparation for teaching of others. I am experiencing my life in three dimensions: the natural, the spiritual and the third dimension—the uncovering of the personality and psyche of a person. I see hidden patterns (almost like checker moves) concepts that I never saw before. . . . I know I've just touched the tip of the island with a whole shore to explore.

Edythe Hepner
Jamaica, New York

Ed. Note: Edythe Hepner is a student in the Society's "Independent Study Course" and is reflecting on her experiences in this course.

June 7, 1988

Dear Lee,

. . . I thank you for being the person who brought my inner beliefs and learning in the Montessori world to reality. Your conference made a great impression. . . . You clarified many questions I had about "how-to" use Montessori principles and strengthened my faith in believing that they would work . . .

God Bless, Sincerely,
Marie Carmichael
Windsor, Vermont

Ed. Note: Marie Charmichael is reporting on her experience at the Society's conference in Reading, Pennsylvania (April 24-25, 1988).

Dear Lee,

Just a note to express my appreciation for your Reading conference. (Reading, Pennsylvania, April 24-25, 1988) . . . The conference was a most rewarding experience, and I gained a great understanding of many Montessori concepts . . .

Sincerely,
Emma Bush
LaFayette, New York

Organizing Montessori in South Carolina

Since 1987, Montessori educators in South Carolina have been meeting together to help each other in resolving their mutual concerns and practical problems in the operation of Montessori schools in that state. These efforts have gradually evolved into the formation of the organization known as "South Carolina Conference of Montessori Educators" (SCCME).

In August, 1988, this new South Carolina Montessori organization published its formal operating policies and procedures which include a "Code of Ethics," membership criteria and plans for activity to support cooperation on behalf of Montessori education in that state. Specifically, SCCME intends to publish a regular newsletter and conduct four (4) seminars each year on topics of special interest and to help solve practical teaching problems associated with a total commitment to the three Montessori principles: *Observation, Individual Liberty and Preparation of the Environment*.

Current SCCME president is Terry Patton. One year membership, either as "professional" or "associate" is \$25.00. To join or to obtain further information, contact: SCCME, P.O. Box 8805, Columbia, South Carolina, 29202, Tel. (803) 731-9378.

Character

Cont'd. from Page 2, Col. 3

Character forms itself during early childhood as an intimate adaptation to various environmental conditions experienced at that time. A stabilized character of strength and substance thereby may emerge normally within the child to reflect such qualities as care, patience, dignity and concentration. Lacking this normal adaptation to its environment during early childhood, the child will be destined to suffer thereafter with persistent problems of learning and behavior which reflect the unfortunate results of earlier misfortunes.

Earlier Misfortunes

"... a child of six may show an accumulation of characteristics which are not really his own, but are the results of earlier misfortunes. . . . then we have a child devoid of character and unable to learn."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 196

Educational efforts to solve basic learning and behavior problems are difficult to achieve in later childhood and as an adult due to earlier misfortunes which have resulted from environmental deprivations before the age of six. Montessori education therefore concentrates its primary attention on the younger child when character defects are still subject to effective remedy. The essential work of Montessori teaching for this purpose is to normalize the conditions.

Normalize the Conditions

"Lack of character, or defects of character, disappear of themselves, without any need for preaching by grownups or for grown-up examples. One does not need to threaten or cajole, but only to 'normalize the conditions' under which the child lives."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 200

A child's normal character is most favorably allowed to develop during early childhood in a "normalizing" condition which is created by one's being a complete "commitment to Montessori principles." Montessori teaching to create such a "normalizing" condition is directed to removing all detrimental influences from the child's environment—including the detrimental influence of the "adult personality" which is often reflected by such behavior as judgmental control over the child or the offering of unnecessary "help." The child's self-creative "normalization" is therefore allowed to proceed according to its own complete freedom.

Freedom

"... the child's character develops in accordance with the obstacles he has encountered or the freedom favoring his development that he has enjoyed."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 195

The young child's character develops normally in a condition of freedom to engage in a wide range of goal-directed activities. This

Montessori Observer, October/1988

complete freedom to work in an organized environment with other children and physical objects gradually builds up inner impressions of order, concentration and help for others which are vital to the child's process of constructing character.

Constructing Character

"... children construct their own characters, building up in themselves the qualities we admire. These do not spring from our example or admonishments, but they result solely from a long and slow sequence of activities, carried out by the child himself between the ages of three and six."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 208

The young child constructs its essential character through an orderly process of concentrated mental activity—a process of constructing character which is recognized in outer form by the child's profound concentration and persistence to self-disciplined work. Dr. Montessori discovered that this normal development of character is brought about most effectively within a large group of mixed aged children where the child can experience a wide variety of circumstances and experiences as part of its ordinary social life.

Social Life

"When the classes are fairly big, differences of character show themselves more clearly, and wider experience can be gained. With small classes this is less easy. The higher levels of perfection all come through social life."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 225

The young child's active social life affords many useful opportunities to perfect its independent judgment and to harmonize its fundamental being with others. Such social aspects in the development of personality are central to the formation of a sound character. After the age of about six, the child's social life becomes even more important to extend its further character development in the more expansive realm of morality.

Morality

"... no one can 'teach' the qualities of which character is composed. . . . Not till six can we become missionaries of morality, because it is between 6 and 12 that conscience begins to function, and the child is able to visualize the problems of good and evil."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 208

Character development in the elementary aged child expresses itself primarily through group experiences which relate to the question of morality; i.e., solving problems of "right" and "wrong" as a matter of conscious choice. After the age of 12, morality develops further through the expression of patriotic feelings and responsible citizenship related to one's own political and cultural group. These extensions of character development through morality and patriotism which gradually evolve the progress

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OBSERVER

The Montessori



"Montessori Today" in Great Britain

In January, 1988, the new magazine entitled *Montessori Today* began publication with its purpose "to increase understanding and awareness of the Montessori approach to child development and to provide an international forum for the communication of ideas and opinions". Published in Great Britain by James Maughan, this new magazine is attempting to bring together people on its editorial and advisory boards from different areas of the Montessori community and related fields of interest.

Irene Fafalios, *Montessori Today* editor, states that "the International appeal of the magazine, coupled with its independent, non-affiliated status, makes it possible to bring together in one publication a series of articles and information which will truly represent the Montessori movement world-wide." Lee Havis, executive director of the International Montessori Society, serves on the magazine's advisory board which also includes representatives from many other organizations throughout the world.

Recent issues of *Montessori Today* have included articles written by various persons active with Dr. Montessori prior to her death in 1952. These articles help to explain the present diversity of Montessori organizations and interpretations which have evolved since Dr. Montessori's first discovery of the "normalized" child in Rome, Italy in 1907.

Montessori Today is published six times each year and sent by air mail to subscribers for an annual fee of £21.00 Sterling. Society members may subscribe for a 20% discount. Payments are accepted in \$US or £Sterling. For further information, contact: James Maughan, *Montessori Today*, P.O. Box 4RB, London W1A 4RB, England.



Alethea Farzad (IMS '87) at work in Society's offices. (Silver Spring, Maryland)

Character

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of civilization towards greater freedom and independence for the human spirit in the world—a process of infinite expansion according to the mysterious cosmic plan of nature.

Plan of Nature

"... the child is the true maker of our spirituality. He teaches us the plan of nature for giving form to our conduct and character. . . ."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 220-221

The child expresses its normal character of strength and substance as an ultimate reflection of the underlying plan of nature—to harmonize the efforts of all on behalf of a better and stronger humanity in the future. By applying the three expansive Montessori principles with children, even imperfect adults can effectively help to realize this cosmic plan of nature in the world—to reveal the perfection of an expanding human dignity and value with which man's true character is ultimately associated.

Moments of Peril

Giving A Lesson

from *Observer*, September 1988

by Lee Havis

A child who is "bored" may well ask for a "lesson" from the teacher to reflect a primary detrimental influence of the adult personality at such times. The ordinary traditional adult response is to propagate further dependency on the adult personality by "teaching"; e.g., to offer some specific suggestion or to give some lengthy presentation of materials.

By contrast, effective Montessori teaching in such a circumstance would engender an expansive "observation" to inquire about the child's own inner interests; e.g., "what work would you like to do?". In this way, the detrimental influence of the dependent adult personality is effectively removed from the child's environment while still maintaining a supportive presence in the nature of a friendly conversation.

The "Tea Party"

Four year old Mary is fantasizing a "tea party" with some of the classroom objects. Mary has involved several other children in her "tea party", none of whom look up at the teacher in any significant manner during their activity. Mary comes over to the teacher and says: "Will you tell the other children that it's my "tea party" and they have to sit where I tell them?" What to do?

Answer in *Observer*, November 1988

IMS MEMBERSHIP NOTICE

Renew Membership Promptly!

Membership rates will increase in 1989