



The Montessori

Maturity

OBSERVER

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New Appointment to Accreditation Committee

On May 3, 1989, Robert A. Destro accepted appointment to serve on the Society's three-member accreditation committee which has final decision-making authority for accreditation of all Society Montessori teacher education. Mr. Destro will fill the vacancy left by retiring committee member Dr. John Garvey who had served on the accreditation committee since its establishment in 1983.

Lee Havis, Society executive director, expressed his deep appreciation for Dr. Garvey's important contribution to the committee's work. Havis stated that "during his tenure, Dr. Garvey offered a valuable legal perspective to the committee's various deliberations. His counsel was a most welcome support and encouragement to the Society's work in the field of Montessori teacher education."

Recommended by Dr. Garvey, the appointment of Mr. Destro for the accreditation committee will continue to assure the presence of a

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Proceedings of the Society's "Creating the New Education" conference held in Houston, Texas on March 11-12, 1989.

New Education Conferences in Texas, Florida and New York

Houston, Texas
March 11-12, 1989

On March 11-12, 1989, the Society conducted its "creating the new education" conference in Houston, Texas. Teachers, administrators and school owners from the states of Texas and Arkansas were in attendance. In addition, one person attended the conference from Barranquilla, Colombia, South America.

Conducted by Lee Havis, this latest Texas Montessori conference centered particular attention on how to keep one's "commitment to Montessori principles" viable and supported as a persistent reality over time.

Havis stated that "the best available means I know at present to assure the reality of this communication in one's life and circumstances with others over time is to maintain a continuing active participation in these Society conferences. Without this unique type of supportive participation with others, many forms of repression, prejudice and indifference arise in one's daily circumstances to overcome even the very best of one's own isolated and individual efforts and intentions in Montessori teaching."

Tampa, Florida
April 15-16, 1989

The Society held its third Florida Montessori conference in that state on April 15-16, 1989. This Tampa, Florida conference included the participation of Montessori teachers and administrators from throughout the state. In addition, one person from the state of New York was also present.

This latest Florida Montessori conference featured particularly a discussion of "action" in the work of applying Montessori principles. Havis indicated that although "Montessori" is a reality created entirely within oneself, its existence must nonetheless involve a definite communication with others through various forms of expression. He stated that "Montessori teaching is an active process of making choices in one's life with others—far beyond mere words of agreement or expressions of belief. Failure to affirmatively act in a manner consistent with "commitment to Montessori principles" is to act by default against this communication—in complicity with the customary traditional forms of repression and abandonment of the child's true 'normalized' nature."

Montessori Conferences

Creating the New Education

Meriden, Connecticut
June 3-4, 1989

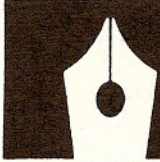
Oakland, California
July 15-16, 1989

West Bend, Wisconsin
August 6-7, 1989

Columbia, South Carolina
August 12-13, 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.



Maturity

by Lee Havis

"A kind of internal maturity must come about . . . When an obvious truth cannot be seen, we must retire, and leave the individual to mature. A struggle 'to bring about perception of evidence' would be bitter and exhausting."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Act.* in Ed., p.237

Dr. Montessori recognized a basic lack of complete "maturity" as that which deters one's ability to realize the obvious truth of the child's true "normality" of being; e.g., loving order, self-disciplined and in complete harmony with others. Such immature adult thinking is particularly evident in society as traditional education where children are either repressed by restrictive adult "teaching" or totally abandoned to idle play and fantasy. Since children cannot fully mature in such a system of traditional education, future generations remain at risk of continuing past patterns of immaturity—to gravely threaten the overall peaceful evolution and constructive development of humanity itself.

Humanity

" . . . humanity is still far from that stage of maturity needed for the realization of its aspirations, for the construction, that is, of a harmonious and peaceful society and the elimination of wars."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.3

Detrimental adult teaching in traditional education—to retard and limit the child's normal process of maturation—is ordinarily well-hidden by a complex inner camouflage of prejudice and unquestioned beliefs. Within the adult personality there tends to prevail a certain credulity with respect to various prejudicial limitations about life and the possibility for being—credulity which inherently deters any substantial investigation or questioning into the cause and nature of reality itself.

Credulity

"Credulity is, indeed, a characteristic of immature minds which lack experiences and knowledge of realities . . ."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Act.* in Ed., p.259

Credulity reflects the immature state of sensory development which fundamentally limits reality to various prejudicial assumptions which are built upon expectations and habits of thinking from the past. The immature mind fails to "see" true "normality" in children because it simply does not "believe" that such a reality could possibly exist. By contrast, Montessori teaching is guided by an infinitely expansive principle of "observation" where one's approach to the child is more a matter of "believing is seeing".

Believing is Seeing

"It is therefore not enough to see in order to believe; we must believe in order to see. It is faith which leads to sight, not sight which produces faith . . . It is not enough that an object should be before our eyes to make us see it . . . it is not evidence but faith which opens the mind to truth."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Act.* in Ed., p.237

Through faith, not external evidence, the reality of the child's true nature is allowed to eventually reveal itself to one's tangible sensory awareness. In practice, the Montessori teacher exercises this faith as an expansive way of being which approaches the child as an "unknown entity" by following a commitment to three specific principles of nature: (1) "Observation"; (2) "Individual Liberty"; and (3) "Preparation of the Environment". Such Montessori teaching expresses a commitment to these three principles to enable the child to realize its own complete process of normal maturation.

Maturation

" . . . 'maturation' . . . denotes a kind of regulating mechanism for growth, which ensures balance in the organism as a whole, and in the direction of its growth impulses."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.93

Within an environment of "commitment to Montessori principles", the child matures by a gradual inner coordination of various elements involved in its total physical, mental and spiritual growth. By about the age of six, this maturation process finally results in the essential formation of the child's entire personality. Prior to the age of six, normal maturation is most significantly enhanced by an environment which includes a wide variety of well-ordered objects and activities which are specifically designed for the child's own independent, self-directed work and active constructive experience.

Work and Experience

" . . . listening to words does not make a man. Only practical work and experience lead the young to maturity."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.22

Young children normally mature only through a process of real work and much practical experience with physical objects. Obviously, the passive listening and rote memory of ordinary traditional instruction therefore tends to work against the child's own natural instincts and needs in the process of normal maturation. By contrast, Montessori teaching applies the

principle "Preparation of the Environment" by providing a diversity of objects and exercises for children to use according to their own individual needs and interests at the particular time.

Environment

" . . . environment has a dominant part to play in the process of maturation."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.95

The environment is particularly critical to the process of maturation during the early childhood period when the young child's "absorbent mind" is uniquely sensitive to environmental experience. After the age of about six, the "absorbent mind" is lost and the child then matures only at a much slower rate of development. With the older child and adults, further maturity is accomplished primarily as an internal process of education which incorporates itself within as a fusion with the personality already formed.

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Lee Havis, Executive Director

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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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Reflections . . .

by Paul Posillo
(Ashaway, Rhode Island)

Using Silence

Paul Posillo is a student in the Society's Independence Study Course for Montessori teaching. His reflections here concern his personal experiences in applying Montessori principles with children in practical situations to "control the environment, not the child."

I have been trying very hard in the recent past not to repeat words (to a child) that were either ineffective or detrimental at a given moment. I have been more and more using silence because words so often . . . escalate . . . misbehaviors . . . I find that I become increasingly frustrated, powerless, inept, failure feeling. Words for me become a power struggle at which I usually fail. If I continue questioning or calling for obedience I usually become frenzied . . . with my strained tone and accusing words.

A simple question of inquiry such as 'Why are you doing that?' becomes in its meaning and tone, "What's the matter with you!" I lose control easily when it comes to using words. I have found that I maintain better control of myself as a commitment to Montessori principles if I limit my use of words. If they don't work or they actually seem to escalate a misbehavior, I abandon them altogether.



Carla Munford (left) and Elaine Pope-Bush (right) in discussion at the Tampa, Florida conference (April 15-16, 1989).

New Appointment

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legal perspective in the committee's various deliberations in the future. Specifically, Mr. Destro's extensive background includes a law degree from the University of California (1975, Berkeley) and considerable experience in the practice of law and in the field of legal education.

In 1983, Mr. Destro was nominated by President Reagan and appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives to serve a six-year term on the United States Commission on Civil Rights. Presently, he is a law professor at the Catholic University of America (Washington, D.C.) where he specializes in constitutional law in the area of civil rights concerning such issues as freedom of speech and church/state relations.

The Society is honored to have the participation of Mr. Destro on the accreditation committee to continue its important work in the field of Montessori teacher education.

...In the Field

By Alethea Farzad

Lynn Philip (IMS Student) represented Montessori education at a meeting of the Home Educators in Connecticut on April 29, 1989 where she invited participation in the Society's conference in Meriden, CT on June 3-4, 1989.

. . . Zamahara Rojas-Berkov, director of the Escuela Montessori Bilingue in Richmond, CA, organized a meeting of persons in her area in March to consider the possibility of having a Society conference in that state. Because of such meetings in the northern California area, a Society conference is now scheduled for July 15-16, 1989 in Oakland, CA. . . Isabel Hodgson, director of the 3-5 Montessori Nursery in London, England, is currently planning a conference to be led by Lee Havis in London on June 24-25, 1989. Isabel became interested in sponsoring such a conference after attending various meetings in California to organize the July conference in that state.

Moment of Peril

Running out the Door

from Observer, March/1989
by Lee Havis

With Gary as the "hub" (see *Observer*, March/1989), the elements of "adult personality" and "other children" are detrimental influences in this situation—no "physical objects" are involved. As always, the approach is to "control the environment, not the child".

The detrimental influence of the "adult personality" emerges as an extremely reactive power struggle which is ordinarily associated with the adult having feelings of considerable tension, fear and confusion. "Other children" who follow Gary out the door add this further element in the environment as a detrimental influence for the adult to "control".

Since one's essential responsibility is for all the children in the classroom, the adult must necessarily remain physically located in the room; i.e., no chasing the children down the hall to bring them back. To control one's "adult personality" in this situation therefore requires primarily a restraint of physical movement to engender a greater awareness of one's own feelings and thoughts at this "moment of peril". One's conscious attention is placed on Gary and the other children out of the room, even though one's physical presence remains unmoved from a stationary position in the room itself.

To remove the detrimental influence of "other children" around Gary, the adult may look out the door to obtain whatever eye contact is possible in this manner. Such eye contact will enable the adult to gesture for the children to return to the room. The returning children may then be seriously cautioned that by the children staying in the room, the responsible adult is more able to observe them to assure their safety.

Multiple Misbehavior Scenarios

In a classroom of thirty children aged 2-6, several children are fantasizing in one corner, pretending to have a "tea party". In another corner of the room, a child is hitting a delicate piece of material against the hard floor. Elsewhere, an older child is violently pushing and grabbing a younger child in a situation that obviously threatens serious physical harm to the child involved. What to do?

Answer in *Observer*, September/1989

Action Counts

"To think and wish is not enough. It is action which counts."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Act*. in Ed., p. 171

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Personality and Education

"Man is a fusion of personality and education, and education includes the series of experiences he undergoes in his life."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Act.* in Ed., p.113

The adult continues the development of an inner maturity throughout life as a process of growing awareness which arises from the totality of present moment experiences which occur over the course of time. This fusion of education with personality enlarges one's being so that past limitations of thought tend to become gradually diminished and disengaged over time. In Montessori teacher education, this process of continuing inner maturity specifically disengages one's "personality" from being as "commitment to Montessori principles"—an educational process which involves a series of present moment creative experiences which reveals the expansive direction of nature itself.

Nature Directs

"Localized states of maturity must first be established, and the efforts to force the child's natural development can only do harm. It is nature that directs."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.88

Throughout life, nature ultimately directs the growth of maturity as an inherent integration of being with the larger creative evolution of the entire universe. Committed to three fundamental laws of nature, the Montessori teacher reflects a vital localized state of maturity on behalf of mankind's normal human growth and development. Such a collaboration with nature begins in one's own immediate personal life and circumstances with children to ultimately expand in its expression with others to support the full and complete maturity of all humanity throughout the entire world.



Participants at the Society's conference in New York, New York (April 29-30, 1989).

New Education Conferences

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New York, New York April 29-30, 1989

On April 29-30, 1989, Lee Havis conducted the Society's "creating the new education" conference in New York, New York. Attended by Montessori teachers and school administrators from throughout the states of New York and New Jersey, this latest New York conference also included a significant number of local area students in the Society's Montessori teacher education program.

The New York conference discussion focused particular attention on the issue of how to control the "adult personality" in circumstances which involve the detrimental presence of other adults; e.g., staff associates, government officials and parents. Havis emphasized that since "other adults" essentially reflect some aspect of one's own "personality", all problems with "others" are really problems within oneself and are therefore subject to successful resolution by one's own responsible, independent being and action.

Havis specifically stated that "by creating one's being as that of 'commitment to Montessori principles' rather than 'personality', other adults must necessarily respond to this new reality to either leave one's presence or to accommodate themselves accordingly in a favorably, supportive manner. As one persistently communicates to others what is really wanted in tangible concrete action, changes will occur in those persons who are directly involved in the particular circumstances in question. Others really do 'change' as a result of one's own 'changing'."

Positions & Placements

Montessori Teacher: (3-6) certified individual for well-established school just east of Hartford, CT. Call school for additional information. Send resume to: Search Committee, Hans Christian Andersen Montessori School, P.O. Box 9125, Bolton, CT 06043, Tel. (203) 646-5727.