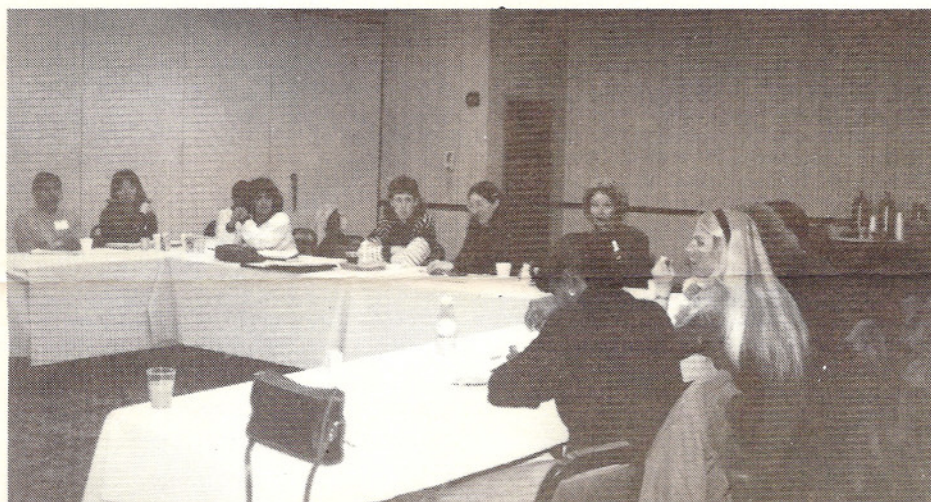




The Montessori OBSERVER

Knowledge

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Participants in discussion at the "Creating the New Education" conference held in San Leandro, California on March 10-11, 1990.

Society Conference in San Leandro, California

The Society conducted its latest "creating the new education" conference on the west coast of the United States in San Leandro, California on March 10-11, 1990. Attending this two-day weekend conference were Montessori teachers, parents and school owners from the states of California and Oregon.

Lee Havis, Society executive director, guided the discussion to analyze and resolve many specific "misbehavior" scenarios according to the approach of "control the environment, not the child". The particular scenarios discussed were those which came from the actual experience of those attending.

The conference focussed special attention on the extent to which "normalization" was a practical possibility in the face of so many repressive countervailing influences in society. The conference discussion considered many "misbehavior" scenarios involving the dynamics of the parent-teacher relationship, and the extent to which one's communication of commitment to Montessori principles could really have an effective impact outside of the physical confines of the classroom.

Havis stated that "the limitations of any adult relationship, whether between staff and employer, or parent and teacher, reflect the detrimental influence of one's own personality. Blame and guilt directed to others is only a cover and escape from one's own responsible role in the matter. As you concentrate more on your own responsible communication with others, there is always eventually some

corresponding change in the surrounding situation—even if this change may not always appear immediately or may not always be seen in the persons directly involved."

Havis also directed attention to the need for more personal responsibility in the establishment and operation of Montessori schools. He indicated that "an employee or parent cannot ultimately control or force a school owner to conform to Montessori principles. When the limits of communication for this purpose have been reached in the immediate circumstances, one must proceed to create the new situations which are needed for further progress of the

Cont'd. on Page 3, Col. 1

Montessori Conference

Creating the New Education

*Columbia, South Carolina
August 4-5, 1990*

Pre-paid registration for the full two-day conference is \$200 per person (\$160 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.

Trust to Create New Montessori Schools

In January, 1990, the International Montessori Trust was established by Lee Havis to create and operate new Montessori schools. The Trust is specifically committed in its business purpose and practice to the effective application of Montessori principles. Each school will be recognized by the International Montessori Society with all its parents and staff actively enrolled in the Society's "group membership" program to assure their close working association with the school's basic purpose.

As trustee, Havis will supervise and direct the operation of all Trust business. During the present start-up phase, he has primarily directed his attention to the planning and preparation of various pro-forma operating documents to deal with such matters as building construction, real estate, marketing, financing, and program operation.

Havis stated that "a single basic concept and approach is needed if the Trust is to effectively coordinate its diverse activities. A uniform building type, standard marketing approach and program format will help the company to function in many different locations without an undue need for administrative control from above."

Havis gave no "time-table" for completion of the initial planning phase, indicating that the first projects would be brought forward only after careful preparation and complete planning on the issues of basic overall concept and approach. He indicated that "current planning favors new construction over leasing space in existing buildings because of availability, cost savings and the advantage of complete design control from the very beginning to assure compliance with the exacting standards of Montessori education. The schools will base their budget on tuition charged to parents for their children's attendance. We must therefore work to maintain these charges as low as possible, while still assuring sufficient funds for adequate staff salaries and other necessary support services for the school's effective operation."

Havis stated that initial development projects will serve as examples and guidance for later schools developed for operation by the Trust. Business practices and procedures will therefore evolve through practical experience—constantly adjusting the Trust operation in accordance with the path of commitment to Montessori principles.

Knowledge

by Lee Havis

"... it is necessary that young people have great knowledge today, profound exact knowledge, incarnated knowledge."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Reconstruction in Ed.*, p. 12

Knowledge is the power of information which enables one to act with certainty—to be in harmony with one's true nature and purpose for creative self-expression. Children acquire this vital power in life as a natural process of their normal development in the Montessori environment. Prior to the age of about six, the child acquires its knowledge spontaneously by the functioning of an extraordinary absorbent mind.

The Child's Mind

"... the child has a type of mind that absorbs knowledge, and thus instructs himself."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Ed. for a New World*, p. 3

The young child's "absorbent" mind takes in complete knowledge of its environment through direct sensory interaction with physical objects—interaction which incorporates the order of the physical universe into the child's entire basic mental formation. The Montessori environment supports this process of absorbing knowledge from the environment by providing a wide range of physical objects which are specifically designed to model the abstractions, order and attributes of nature; e.g., size, sequence, shape, color, dimensionality, texture, weight and temperature. The young child may therefore concentrate its attention and interest on these special physical objects to form within itself the basic prepared order of nature for all later learning in life.

Prepared Order

"... It is not the accumulation of direct knowledge of things which forms the man of letters... it is the prepared order established in the mind which is to receive such knowledge."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Act. in Ed.*, p. 206

A basic organizing framework forms itself within the young child to prepare for storage and recall of a vast quantity of new and useful information. Such a prepared mental order tends to limit and regulate the development of knowledge—to define the very bounds of one's way of thinking and being as a distinct personality in the world. Knowledge which reflects this basic inner order provides an essential direction and guidance to the child in all its external activity and movement.

Movement

"Knowledge always precedes movement. When a child wished to do something, he knows before hand what it is."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 83

Movement is normally directed by the intellect to express the child's fundamental

tendency to explore its environment. Once one thing is known, the child explores those elements surrounding that thing by a process of goal-directed cycles of activity. When disturbed in this normal exploration of the environment, the child reacts defensively by engaging in "misbehavior"; e.g., violent aggression, hostile defiance, or more subtly, to simply escape into an inner world of fantasy and make-believe play.

Play

"... children would rather acquire knowledge than be engaged in senseless play."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Discovery of the Child*, p. 232

Make-believe "play" is the young child's natural defense against a hostile environment of repression, abandonment and neglect. In traditional education, children play to mentally escape from the burden and stress of an adult-controlled curriculum which is imposed on them by the rigid structure of group-oriented instruction. By contrast, the Montessori "normalizing" environment allows children to freely work according to their own individual interests and needs—to acquire knowledge not only by direct interaction with physical objects, but also through their social experiences with others.

Social Experience

"Knowledge and social experience must be acquired at one and the same time."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *From Child. to Adolescence*, p. 26

Observing and working with others, children become interested in a wide range of experiences and activities for self-directed learning. The Montessori environment gives children the complete freedom to explore these learning opportunities within a large group of mixed-age children—an ideal circumstance for many interesting social experiences to arise which would be otherwise denied in the typical teacher-directed classroom or "day care" situation. To support this useful social interaction, the Montessori teacher intervenes very little—and then only indirectly to awaken the child's interest.

Awaking the Interest

"... knowledge may truly be developed by awaking the interest."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *From Child. to Adolescence*, p. 130

Montessori teaching awakens the child's interest in the environment by a subtle form of indirect interaction; e.g., "eye contact" from across the room, hand gesture to "come", a word of direction to "watch." With older children, the Montessori teacher awakens interest which extends far beyond the physical bounds of the immediate classroom situation—interest

which cannot be directly satisfied by concentration on physical objects alone. The older child follows this type of wider interest in the universe by exercising the great power of creative imagination.

Imagination

"The world is acquired psychologically by means of the imagination. Reality is studied in detail, then the whole is imagined. The detail is able to grow in the imagination, and so total knowledge is attained."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *From Child. to Adolescence*, p. 34

After the child's basic mentality has been formed by about the age of six, knowledge is acquired primarily through the right use of imagination. By interrelating one detail of the environment with another, the older child gradually comes to imagine the total functioning of the whole—to discover the cosmic purpose for which all the separate parts are working together in harmony. Such an expansive cosmic education requires the Montessori teacher not so much to impart new knowledge about the universe, but rather to direct the child's overwhelming eagerness to learn.

Cont'd. on Page 3, Col. 2

Look for the
September Observer
featuring
Expectations

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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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Moment of Peril

Readers are invited to submit their own scenarios of disorder or misbehavior with children for analysis and resolution in the "Observer" according to the approach of "control the environment, not the child". Requests for anonymity will be respected.

The Outdoor Environment

from *Observer*, March 1990
by Lee Havis

In the outdoor environment, "misbehavior" scenarios involving the detrimental influence of "other children" often emerge in situations of ordinary "play" (see *Observer*, March 1990). Since the fantasy associated with such "play" is usually quite deeply engrained, efforts to remove "other children" as a detrimental influence at such times may not be successful with one's first "eye contact" lessons. As with Billy in the present "moment of peril", children in deep fantasy play may well refuse to "come" to the teacher the first few times they are called.

Since the physical harm in the present "moment of peril" does not appear too great, the teacher is best advised to remain patient in her stationary observation position, watching the situation carefully to offer new "eye contact" lesson and a gesture to "come" as soon as the opportunity presents itself. Gradually, the level of violence and fantasy will diminish as these "eye contact" lessons have their effect over time—so that the children become more connected with reality and normal being in harmony with another.

When physical harm in a particular "misbehavior" scenario is viewed as a serious priority over all other possible dangers of "physical harm" in the total group, one may walk slowly over to the "priority" situation to provide a more direct "observation" and "control of the environment" during the process of its resolution. This more active "observation" may be necessary where there has existed relatively little "eye contact" between the teacher and the various children involved.

Sharing

Two year old Nicholas has the dust pan. Another two year old child comes up and takes hold of the dust pan, whereupon Nicholas begins to cry while he is holding on vigorously for sole possession. Nicholas looks up at the teacher. The other child doesn't look up but simply pulls harder to obtain sole control and possession of the dust pan. What to do? *Answer in Observer*, September 1990.

Conference in San Leandro

Cont'd from Page 1, Col. 2

'new education'." Havis stated his interest and concern for the Society to provide a greater support for these necessary efforts for new Montessori schools.

The Society's next conference is planned for Columbia, South Carolina on August 4-5, 1990. Interested persons are invited to pre-register. Society members receive a \$40 per person discount.



Participants at Society's conference in San Leandro, California (March 10-11, 1990). Left to right are: M.A. Bowe (Gilroy, CA), Laura Schenk (Grants Pass, OR), Robin Amos (Grants Pass, OR) and Sue Hunt (Grants Pass, OR).

Knowledge

Cont'd. from Page 2, Col. 3

Eagerness to Learn

"... the practical problem of the teacher is not to impart knowledge within fixed limits, but rather to 'restrain' and 'direct' the children in their eagerness to learn even more."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Formation of Man*, p.51

Montessori teaching must at times restrain the older child's overwhelming eagerness to learn—to help children focus their attention and interest on that which can be accomplished within the practical limits of available time and resources. The adult must therefore carefully "observe" to see how best to guide the child in its constant quest for more knowledge and information amid the limitless expanse of the entire universe. Such a discerning "observation" of children requires a constant inner preparation to question perceptions and re-examine one's deepest inner thoughts—to continually prepare oneself by a habit of constant practice.

Practice

"... the possession of senses and of knowledge is not sufficient to enable a person to observe; it is a habit that must be developed by practice."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Act in Ed.*, p.130

Beyond the academic knowledge of theory and techniques in the presentation of materials, Montessori teachers must practice an expansive "observation" by engaging with children in a constant process of trial and error. "Control of error" in this experimental way of being is found by reference to three underlying principles of nature; (1) "observation"; (2) "individual liberty"; and (3) "preparation of the environment". These three Montessori principles necessarily direct attention within oneself to work towards complete self-knowledge.

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 1

LETTERS TO IMS

March, 1990

Dear Lee,

It was interesting and encouraging to speak with you about your plans to create true Montessori schools. I think that your active participation in this will make all the difference in the project's success. There does seem to be a good potential for a true Montessori school in my area.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Sanders, IMS student
Fredericksburg, Virginia

March 27, 1990

Dear Lee:

In recent issues of your publications I have become gradually aware that you are interested in knowing how many there are in a given area or neighborhood, for instance Takoma Park, would like a Montessori conference... I'd say Yes to a Montessori Conference, if not in Takoma Park, at least in the vicinity of Takoma Park.

Sincerely,

Paul R. Kerchendorfer
Takoma Park, Maryland

April 6, 1990

Dear Montessori Concerned,

I hope to become a (Society) member at some point in the near future. I enjoy reading the Montessori News and have been an avid reader of Maria Montessori's works. Her approach has been an inspiration and help to both my husband and me.

Sincerely,

Rosemary Lavin
Middletown Spring, Vermont

April 16, 1990

Lee Havis:

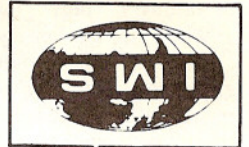
Thank you very much for copying me on your letter to Dr. Irene Bandy of the Ohio Department of Education on the Montessori views on the abolition of corporal punishment. We very much appreciate your support for our work in trying to get corporal punishment banned in Ohio. We are anxious to join the other 20 states which have banned this archaic, ineffective, and harmful practice.

Nadine Block
National Coalition to Abolish
Corporal Punishment in Schools

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The Montessori



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Knowledge

Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 2

Self-Knowledge

"... adults ... are confronted with the problem of self-knowledge, that is, of knowledge of the hidden laws that direct the psychic development of man."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.208

To really know one's deepest "self" is to discover the truth of reality in the present moment—a conscious awareness of "being" which extends over time as a process of deep inner reflection, insight and objective analysis. True self-knowledge therefore implies far more than perception of "self" as distinct from others; i.e., "personality". To expand one's being beyond the limited self-concept of "personality", one need only think about the three Montessori principles—a process of expansive being which ultimately releases the unknown human potentialities of the normalized child.

Human Potentialities

"Education should no longer be mostly imparting of knowledge, but must take a new path, seeking the release of human potentialities."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Ed. for a New World* p.2

Being a "commitment to Montessori principles" allows children to realize their hidden potential for true normal development in complete harmony with the environment—to gain knowledge not from answers given directly by the teacher, but rather from their own independent discovery and self-directed activity. By "observing" rather than "teaching", the adult disengages from the ordinary dependent adult-child relationship—to serve instead the child's spirit according to its own true nature. Knowing the three Montessori principles guides one in overcoming the many obstacles



Lunch break during proceedings of the "Creating the New Education" conference held in San Leandro, California —March 10-11, 1990

of ignorance and prejudice which otherwise fundamentally deter one's ability to allow the normalized child to fully emerge.

Prejudice

"When prejudice will be vanquished by knowledge, then there will appear in the world a 'superior' child with his marvelous powers which today remain hidden."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Formation of Man*, p.99

Blinded by such prejudices as "children are bad" (and therefore must be controlled) and "children are empty" (and therefore must be taught), adults ordinarily disregard the possibility that children have their own inborn self-discipline and inner direction for proper intellectual development. These deeply engrained adult prejudices remain unconscious and therefore tend to persist as a major obstacle to helping children gain their full potential for knowledge and independent functioning in the

world. In Montessori education, teachers must practice a completely non-prejudicial way of being—to approach the child as an unknown entity.

Unknown Child

"The most urgent task facing educators is to come to know this unknown child and to free it from all entanglements."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.109-10

The Montessori teacher views the child as an "unknown entity" so that its true nature is allowed to fully reveal itself as a discovery in the present moment. The "normalized" child which emerges from this way of being shows the true spirit of all mankind as being in complete harmony with the entire plan of creation. Guided by the three Montessori principles, one may therefore come to know the unknown child as a vital point of departure for all true knowledge in the universe.