



The Montessori OBSERVER

Purpose

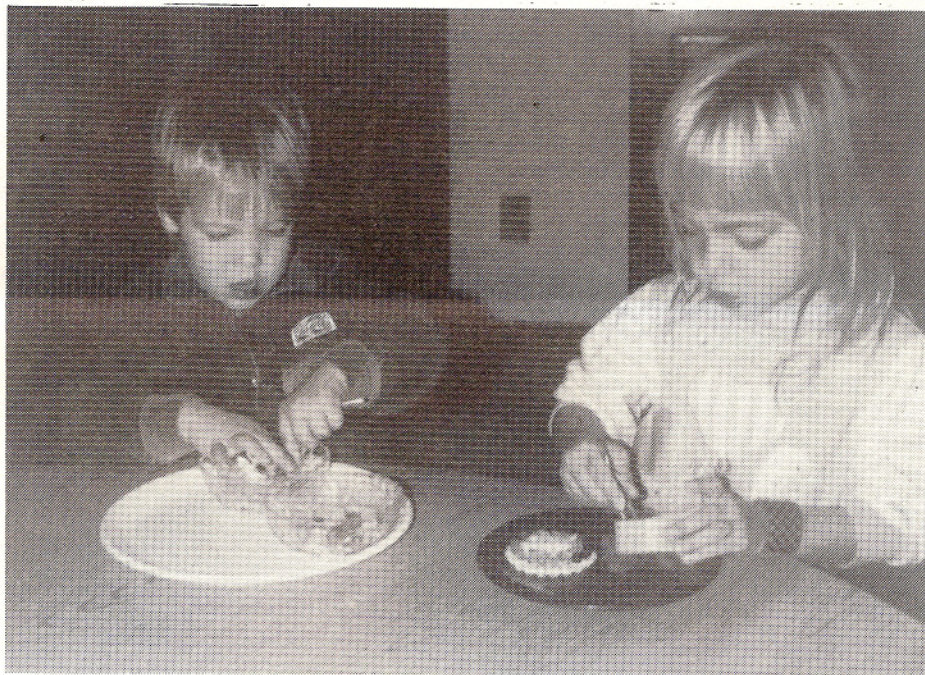
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Parent Enrollment at Model Children's House

The first model Children's House program of the International Montessori Trust (*Powder Mill Children's House*, Beltsville, MD) is providing important new information about parent enrollment and advertising—issues which critically affect all new Montessori schools.

Lee Havis, director of the Powder Mill model program, indicates that "even though the physical environment of a new school may be set up and ready for operation, delay in the issuance of the government license may result in a considerable period of time before the program can actually open for business. During this initial non-operational period, parents and children can nonetheless inspect the facilities and plan for their future enrollment. A Saturday 'open house' is particularly convenient to meet with parents who ordinarily work during the week. At the 'open house', the presence of

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 2



Children working at the Stone Mill Montessori School in Lawrenceville, Georgia.

Reflections...

Eye Contact

by Charmaine Johannes
(Anacorters, Washington)

Charmaine Johannes is a student in the Society's teacher education program. Her reflections here are based on her experiences in the Independent Study Course and at the Society's Oakland, CA conference held in 1989.

The principle of Observation "without comment" or "associated with some other non-verbal expression or gesture" is still confusing to me. Eye contact without attempting to manipulate a situation seems more confusing. I can't seem to grasp the idea yet. The purpose of eye-contact is to "to keep in touch" with the child, the situation, isn't it? To reassure in some situations, to catch a child's attention in order to take them from the situation that may become disruptive? The eye-contact should be reassuring to the child, and calm. Even in a situation of disorder.

I remember from the Oakland conference discussing personality and feelings. . . . We can feel anger without being angry, we can feel frustration without being frustrated. So, in being an effective Montessori teacher, we practice being aware of our feelings, our personality and separating them from our actions—eye-contact and interference in situations with the

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 1

Stone Mill Montessori in Lawrenceville, Georgia

In 1988, Jean Wilson reorganized her home in Lawrenceville, Georgia to serve as a Montessori school environment for young children. This environment, known as *Stone Mill Montessori School* is now licensed as a family day care home to provide a single full-day program, 8-5 daily, for children aged 2-5.

Jean first became interested in Montessori education through her classroom teaching experience with Virginia Jones (IMS '86). In 1987, she enrolled herself in the Society's "Independent Study Course" and finally started her own home school program for children in September, 1988. With a full enrollment and more parents seeking to enroll their children all the time, Jean would like to expand into a larger facility which would allow a much greater enrollment capacity.

Jean says she enjoys her role as teacher and school owner, and often has visitors who come to observe and learn from her experience. She states that when parents come to visit, they are "amazed at how there is so little misbehavior" and at "how busy the children are in their work".

Jean Wilson is presently completing her work in the Society's Montessori teacher education program and has been a regular participant in the Society's Montessori conferences in her area during the past few years.

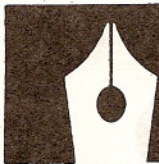
For further information, contact: Jean Wilson, Stone Mill Montessori School, 494 Ridgemont Dr., Lawrenceville, GA 30245, Tel. (404) 995-5669.

Independent Study Course Renews Accreditation

On October 17, 1990, the three-member Accreditation Committee of the International Montessori Society met in Silver Spring, Maryland to give continuing accreditation of the Society's 22-lesson "Independent Study Course". Based on an extensive process of self-study, on-site evaluation visit and recommendation by the Society's review committee, the Committee extended the accreditation of this teacher education program until April, 1992.

Prior to April, 1992, the Society must complete another self-study and course review process according to procedures clarified by the Committee at its October 17, 1990 meeting. Specifically, the Accreditation Committee requires that certain new documents be provided directly to the Committee with the review committee recommendation and that a formalized written evaluation of graduates be conducted and verified in writing by the review com-

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 3



Purpose

by Lee Havis

"... the purpose of life is to obey the occult command which harmonizes all and creates an ever better world. The world was not created for us to enjoy, but we are created in order to evolve the cosmos."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from Ed. for a New World, p. 26-27

Man's underlying purpose to "evolve the cosmos" remains ordinarily hidden and obscured by the many urgent demands for various short-term goals of physical comfort and survival. Only in moments of profound insight and inspiration does one experience the reality of such a cosmic purpose in life. Even those who have experienced the reality of the child's true "normalized" nature; i.e., loving order, spontaneously self-disciplined and in harmony with all creation, often fail to recognize their Montessori teaching to enable normalization to occur as a transcendent cosmic task in the evolution of the universe.

Cosmic Task

"Man too, like all beings, has two purposes, conscious and unconscious. He is conscious of his own intellectual and physical needs... but has yet to become conscious of his far deeper responsibilities to a cosmic task, his collaboration with others in work for his environment."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from To Ed. the Human Potential, p. 42

Man's basic cosmic task generally exists below the level of conscious awareness—hidden by the superficial drama of struggle with others as determined by needs of "personality". During early childhood, this "personality" is stabilized within as the basic drama for full self-expression in the face of a hostile surrounding environment. Within the ordinary conditions of repressive adult control, the young child forms its personality as a fatal deviation from the larger cosmic purpose of being in the world.

Fatal Deviation

"By a fatal deviation, a man has been separated from his goal in life."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from Secret of Childhood, p. 188

Personality forms itself during early childhood as a structure of unconscious prejudices and limited perceptions conforming to the expectations of one's own family and culture. Such a fatal deviation from true natural being emerges in various forms of excessive dependence, weakness of character and a general condition of fear and mistrust of others. In society, this deviated personality expresses a drama of struggle and need for superficial goals which confuse the means of life with their ultimate ends.

Means and Ends

"... man confounds the means... with the ends in many of his functions... nutrition is made a pretext for gluttony, and the appetite an end in itself... he employs his creative energy of thought for its own sake."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from Spontaneous Act. in Ed., p. 243

Disconnected and deviated from one's true purpose, the ordinary adult generally seeks only after various limited goals, such as "making money" and "having things". However, these superficial goals represent at best only a means to achieve the real ends of satisfaction, harmony and balance with the infinite laws of nature. Confusing means with their ends is unconsciously communicated to children through ordinary traditional education.

Traditional Education

"To dominate the child, to bring him into subjugation—this is the basis of (traditional) education. If this can be done by any means whatever, even by violence, all the rest will follow."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from Spontaneous Act. in Ed., p. 29-30

The purpose of traditional education, i.e., to instruct children according to the superficial demands of adult society, brings with it also a basic repression of the child's true nature. Even though some limited goals may be achieved by the repressive means of traditional "teaching", the real purpose of education, i.e., to free the human spirit, is fatally absent. Efforts to reclaim the true purpose of education are often only directed towards such transitory goals as "happiness".

Happiness

"Happiness is not the whole aim of education. A man must be independent in his powers and character, able to work and assert his mastery over all that depends on him."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from Absorbent Mind, p. 170

"Happiness" as a goal in education is insufficient as an ultimate purpose because of its ordinary dependence on others for success. Without real self-confidence and independence, any real "happiness" which may be achieved by pursuit of this goal alone would be rather short-lived and uncertain. By contrast, Montessori education supports independence in children so that they can find their own happiness in life—not by "teaching", but rather by following such fundamental principles of nature as "observation".

Observation

"... observation... has a purpose. Its object is to find out what are the laws of life."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from Absorbent Mind, p. 13

The Montessori teacher observes children to discover their true normal being in accordance

with infinite and eternal laws of nature. Such a patient way of being with children reflects a commitment to certain specific principles of nature; i.e., (1) "Observation"; (2) "Individual Liberty"; and (3) "Preparation of the Environment". These three Montessori principles provide a precise and effective guidance to the adult's "being" which allows the child to fulfill its own instinctive duty in life.

Child's Duty

"... the child... His duty is to realize the present stage of an evolving society."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from Absorbent Mind, p. 58

The young child spontaneously obeys an inner duty to intimately absorb its surrounding culture—to incorporate this culture into its essential being as "personality". During the formative period of early childhood, children are directed instinctively from within to achieve a fundamental adaptation with the environment through the amazing power of the young child's "absorbent mind". Such a constructive purpose of adaptation emerges in the Montessori environment in many forms of goal-directed movement.

Cont'd. on Page 3 Col. 2

Look for the
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featuring
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The Montessori Observer

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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 \$20 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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Moment of Peril

Ninja Turtles

from *Observer*, October/1990
by Lee Havis

Five-year-old Buddy is acting out the fantasy of "Ninja Turtle" (see *Observer*, October/1990) as an escape from pain which is somehow present in his real-life circumstances. The turtle's "shell" protects against the attacks of others, and the "ninja" aspect dramatizes the skill and proficiency in self-expression that is significantly lacking in Buddy's present-moment reality. As "Ninja Turtle", Buddy is able to hide from the weak, defenseless and powerlessness position of his own real-life situation.

Assuming that "other children" and "physical objects" are disengaged as detrimental influences in Buddy's environment, the only remaining potential for detrimental influence is the "adult personality". With "fantasy" as is the case with Buddy here, the "adult personality" is detrimentally reflecting the same escape into fantasy as the child. (Buddy as the "hub", the "unknown entity", is not subject to direct analysis since the approach is always "control the environment, not the child").

To "control" the detrimental influence of the "adult personality" in this situation is a matter of growing awareness of the particular fantasy; i.e., by watching and listening to the external aspects of the drama. In time, this passive "observation" of fantasy tends to disengage the detrimental influence of the "adult personality"—as one's own confusion, tension and discomfort is gradually noticed and resolved. Non-judgmental "eye contact" with Buddy will gradually provide the necessary connection with reality, and the fantasy will thereby disappear of itself.

If Buddy's fantasy does not completely resolve with "passive" observation and eye contact lessons with the adult, one may proceed to question the child through friendly conversation (assuming that the rest of the environment is in a state of relative calmness and order). Open-ended questions are best: e.g., what are you doing? where are you going? These questions open up more specific questions about the fantasy which gradually reveal and effectively resolve the underlying repressed feelings. As these painful feelings are recognized and resolved, Buddy will spontaneously turn towards purposeful normal activity in the environment.

I want Mommy

Three year old Molly is crying by herself in the middle of the floor. Between tears, she screams out "I want Mommy!". Although she has a piece of work in front of her offered by the teacher, her crying continues. She does not look up to the teacher for eye contact, but rather continues her crying. Since the teacher has discerned no harm coming from the immediate circumstances, she suspects that Molly really is missing her mother. What to do?

Answer in *Observer*, March/1991

Purpose

Cont'd. from Page 2, Col. 3

Movement

"... the true purpose of movement is far higher than to produce an appetite or strengthen the lungs; it is to serve the ends of existence, the universal and spiritual economies of nature."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 141

The normal child moves in response to a mysterious inner plan to unfold one's own unique purpose first set in motion at the moment of conception. Following always some predetermined object, normal movement involves no wasted effort or energy—even though a young child's activity may at times appear as quite awkward and uncertain. This self-directed activity allows children to work out problems in their own way without adult interference—to learn new knowledge and real-life skills in the process of correcting error.

Error

"... cultivate a friendly feeling towards error ... as something having a purpose, which it truly has."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 246

Errors serve the important purpose of showing where correction is necessary and possible to perfect one's being. "Individual Liberty" is given in the Montessori environment to allow the children to correct their own errors to thereby develop real self-confidence and effective problem-solving ability. The "normalized" child will show its perfected being most keenly as an older child through the harmony of social organization it creates with others.

Social Organization

"... the amount of light a child has acquired in the moral field, and the lofty ideals he has formed, will be made useful for purposes of social organization at a later stage."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *To Ed. the Human Potential*, p. 6

The "normalized" nature of the young child is seen in older children through their spontaneous social organization—a natural harmony with others which extends far beyond the politeness of ordinary adult society. Normal children show a patience and respect among themselves that serves as a model for a new and effective social harmony in the world. This "normalized" being in harmony with the environment is the central focus and great task of true education.

Great Task of Education

"The great task of education must be to secure and preserve a normality which, of its own nature, gravitates towards the center of perfection."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 239

The emergence of the "normalized" child is the underlying great task of true education—to free the human spirit to make its unique contribution to the evolution of humanity. By being a "commitment to Montessori principles" with children, the adult is serving this great task

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 3

The Montessori Sub

by Paul Posillo
(Ashaway, Rhode Island)

This school year, 1990-91, I finally reached a level of courage and confidence with respect to my ability to live as a commitment to Montessori's principles to seek work as a substitute teacher in both public and private schools and child care centers.

There was a time, not long ago, when the mere thought of substitute teaching in "non-Montessori" environments would send shivers through me and mentally and emotionally paralyze me. But thanks to the personal support I have received through the International Montessori Society via all its modes of reaching out and communicating (correspondence, phone calls, observations at Society affiliated schools, conferences, publications, and independent study course), I have transcended that low level of being and I am subbing in grades N-12 in all content and special areas including Special Education and Resource. I have even been assigned hall monitoring duty which I also approach as *commitment to Montessori principles*.

Over the years and especially culminating at this past summer's Society conference, *Creating the New Education*, in Columbia, South Carolina, I have become acutely aware of the importance of language. In a nutshell, every human expression, whether verbal or physical, is language. The child is ALWAYS speaking. Every breath, every movement and every utterance is language which we can interpret and use to help the child move towards normalization. I would like to share with you now a couple of incidences that may be of help to others who are faced with similar situations.

In one school in which I worked, it was obvious that the children had been under a heavy regime. Many of them exhibited only the grossest (not refined) behaviors when presented with an environment that left them in the position of making their own choices and decisions. One child in particular elbowed the child on his right. He then turned and elbowed the child on his left. Immediately, he turned around and began punching the child behind him. He had a look of hostility and anger on his face and in the movements of his body. The sounds and words coming from his voice spoke the same. My very first thought as a result of believing in the normalized child and living by Montessori principles was, "Who has been hitting this child?" I did not verbalize this to him. I merely said to him with much empathy and nonjudgment "How does it feel to be hit?". He looked up at me with eyes full of pain and said calmly, "I hate it when my father hits me."

He then on his own went to the front desk, picked up the assigned work that had been left for the class to do and returned to his seat and worked on it till the end of the period. At the end of class and on his way to the next room, he made it a point to come up to me, put his hand out to shake mine, looked me straight in the eye and said, "Thank you." He asked if I'd be back again tomorrow.

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OBSERVER

The Montessori



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Reflections . . .

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 1

idea that we should solve children's problems or do their work for them.

The eyes are the doors to the soul. So, the discipline is to allow the more deeper understandings to flow from them, not the initial judgmental types of reactions to situations. I am beginning to see the value of eye-contact on a deeper level.

Be Faithful to Yourself

by Bonnie Sanders
(Fredericksburg, Virginia)

Bonnie Sanders is a graduate of the Society's Montessori teacher education program. Her reflections here concern her personal experience in applying Montessori principles with her children throughout the past few years while taking the "Independent Study Course".

Mikalle (six years old) appears to be solving very hard problems of life on her own. Evidently, she is posing questions to herself, and finding her own answers (She was about two when I began this course, so, of course, she is used to questions.) I was really touched by something she said a few weeks ago. She had made something for her favorite babysitter. She had worked very hard on it and was so excited about giving it to him. When she tried to give it to him, he refused it. She kept insisting that he take it, but he just said "Oh, no thank-you." I don't think he meant to be inconsiderate, he just seemed blind to her gesture. I could tell she was hurt, but I was at a loss as to what to do. It reminded me of a time when I was young and a similar incident had occurred to me. I remembered being crushed and convinced more firmly that somehow I was not "good enough" as a person. However, with Mikalle, something valuable happened. A short while later, she came to me and said, "No matter what happens, no matter who hurts you, always be faithful to yourself." I was astounded by the words and the wisdom. You don't expect something like that from a 6-year old child. I sat in silence. What courage, what faith in herself it must have taken for her to come to such a conclusion.

Parent Enrollment

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 1

Other parents and children makes for a friendly social event which encourages a more positive attitude towards the new program."

Advertising for a new Montessori school is also under study at the Powder Mill Children's House. Havis states that "since a new program is unknown in the community, a considerable initiative must be taken to generate inquiries from parents. A program cannot always choose its starting date during the most favorable summer months when parents are usually making decisions for school and child care. Once these decisions have been made, it is difficult to arouse interest in changing to a new situation."

Havis believes that effective advertising for a new program is greatly helped by the presence of an attractive, visible sign on the property outside. He states that "a telephone number on the sign will enable parents to easily contact the program—before the program's number is listed in the yellow pages. An answering machine with the telephone will take messages even though no one may be physically present to receive the call. However, a new program will probably still need to initiate communication with qualified parents."

Some inquiries may be from parents too young or otherwise unprepared for the 2-6 group experience. Children under the age of two who are unable to go to the bathroom on their own are generally unsuited for an effective Children's House program. Havis states that "the infant's need for so much individual attention from the adult will necessarily detract from one's responsible supervision of the total group. Parents of these unqualified young children may nonetheless be placed on a 'waiting list' to be contacted at an appropriate time in the future."

For further information about the Powder Mill Children's House, contact: International Montessori Trust, 6812 Dartmouth Ave., College Park, MD 20740, Tel. (301) 589-0733.



Advertising sign on the premises of Powder Mill Children's House (Beltsville, Maryland).

Purpose

Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 2

of education—to create a "new education" far beyond the limited purposes and goals of ordinary traditional education. However unconscious may be one's own personal association with this great work of "creating the new education", such committed being with children is nonetheless serving the vital purpose of evolving the creative plan of the universe.

Independent Study Course

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 3

mittee. The Society's review committee will provide preliminary course examination leading up to a recommendation which is submitted to the Accreditation Committee for its final decision. The Accreditation Committee also encouraged the Society to continue its efforts to broaden participation in its accreditation review process.

At present, the Society's accreditation process is available only to teacher education programs specifically affiliated with the Society. Requirements for such affiliation include compliance with standards and criteria which are consistent with a commitment to the three Montessori principles. The Society only recognizes teacher education programs which are accredited by its Accreditation Committee. For further information, contact: IMS, 912 Thayer Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20910.