

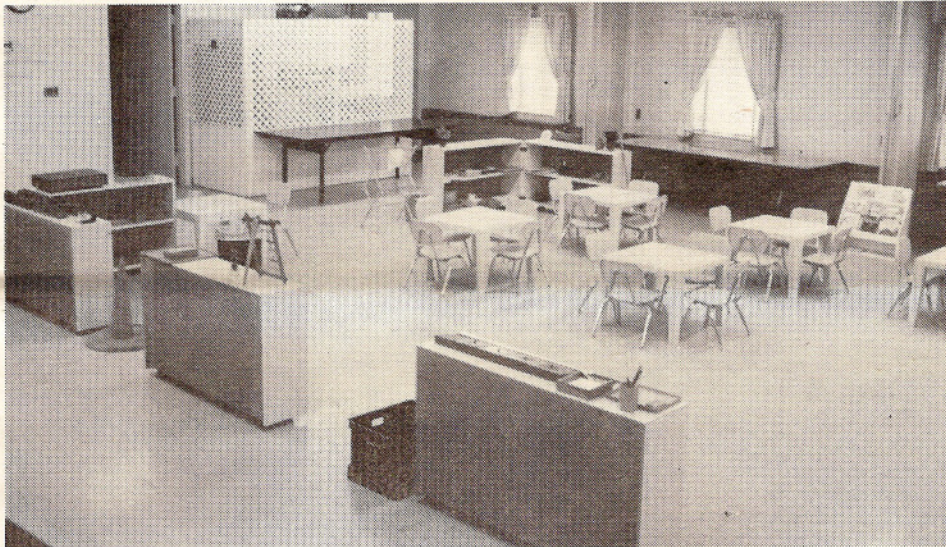


The Montessori

OBSERVER

Danger

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Physical environment of the Powder Mill Montessori Center, operated by International Montessori Trust (Beltsville, Maryland).

Powder Mill Montessori Center Provides Model Environment

The Powder Mill Montessori Center (Beltsville, MD) provides an important model environment to develop procedures and policies for the effective operation of Montessori educational programs. Under the direction of Lee Havis, this first program established by the International Montessori Trust is already teaching valuable practical lessons about such issues as staff preparation, parent enrollment and relationship with various community institutions and agencies.

The Center's model environment also includes furniture which has been specifically designed for use by children aged 2-6. Havis states that "the tables, shelving and coat lockers are made with an almond colored plastic laminate finish to offer the most favorable uniform light background to enhance the contrasting colors of the Montessori materials. Plastic stackable chairs were ordered from an available commercial source—to closely match the uniform almond color of the other furniture. All furniture and equipment in the environment will be tested in actual use with children to identify what adjustments, if any, would be most desirable for future projects."

The Powder Mill Montessori Center is conveniently located just off a major highway in suburban Washington, D.C. and is scheduled to open as soon as final licensing requirements have been met. Since capacity is presently limited to an enrollment of only twenty (20) children, parents in the community are encouraged to contact the Center now to assure a place for their 2-6 year old child. Tuition fee schedules

are offered for either full-day (7-6) or school-day (9-3) sessions. For further information, contact: Lee Havis, International Montessori Trust, 6 812 Dartmouth Ave., College Park, MD 20740, tel. (301) 5 89-0733.

Reflections...

by Bonnie Sanders
(Fredericksburg, Virginia)

My Summer Vacation

Bonnie Sanders is a student in the Society's Montessori teacher education program. Her reflections here concern her personal experience in applying Montessori principles with her own children, David and Kali, during the summer of 1990.

There have been monumental breakthroughs this summer. I've seen miracles with my children. There is no way I can deny the truth of this way of being with children. No way. Children need a Montessori being as much as they need food and water, yet to be a Montessori teacher is like defying gravity itself. How can something so natural and right be so difficult? One day all the beauty of the normalized child shows through. Then the next day some problem so deep surfaces, that I am torn apart and everything I have learned blows away. Strangely enough, on these days, it is my own children

Cont'd. on Page 3, Col. 3

ACE Coalition Plans New Action

On September 12, 1990, the Americans for Choice in Education (ACE) met in Washington, D.C. to plan its new action agenda for more "educational freedom" in the United States. This broad-based coalition of diverse groups and individuals will primarily direct its new action to creating more flexibility in regulations affecting the federal government funding of local education and day care programs.

The September meeting also elected Lee Havis, Society executive director, to serve as its chairperson—to guide the coalition's policies and planning in the operation of its various activities. Havis also accepted the responsibility of organizing specific efforts to create the needed "flexibility" in federal government regulations.

Havis stated that "if an exemption, variance or waiver could be written into the present rigid regulations in federal funding programs, local and state agencies could then begin to exercise more real choice in the delivery of services. Alternatives to restrictive staff training requirements, group size limitations and staff-child ratios would allow for a wider range of healthy competition and experimentation in the field of child care and educational programs. Such diversity is simply not possible at present in various government funded programs because of the excessively rigid nature of existing regulations. With a waiver provision, local agencies could try out a variety of delivery systems, such as a voucher approach, to allow low-income families to choose a private program which would not otherwise qualify under the existing rigid regulations. Competition and choice, not more money, is what is needed for real excellence and quality in the field of education and child care."

The ACE coalition will continue its other important informational services to help coordinate the many diverse efforts for "educational freedom" by its various member organizations. An important aspect of this informational service is the publication of a quarterly report by newsletter editor, Dr. Daniel McGarry (St. Louis, MO).

The ACE coalition welcomes new members, individuals and groups, interested in working with others for educational freedom. For further information, contact: ACE, Suite One, 927 S. Walter Reed Dr., Arlington, VA 22204.



Danger

by Lee Haviv

"This is the great danger of mankind. The child who is not protected with a view to his normal formation will later avenge himself on society by means of the adult who is formed by him."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 78

Human life is in constant danger from the widespread, growing conditions of ignorance, poverty, crime and violence in the world—a danger that arises as a direct result of the unconscious repression of the child's natural inborn instincts for self-directed learning, independence and spontaneous self-discipline. Whether by outright coercive "teaching" or by more subtle forms of neglect or "abandonment", ordinary traditional education and child care warps and distorts the child's true normal development during the most important critical years of early childhood. The personality that is formed from such a repressive childhood environment lacks the basic character attributes that enable the child to successfully stand up to the serious dangers of modern social life.

Social Life

"... dangers that spring from the very nature of man become still more serious at a time when social life is so disturbed and uncertain as it is at present."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *From Child. to Adolescence*, p. 103

Traditional education distorts the child's entire basic personality development to conform to the repressive order of adult social life—a pervasively restrictive structure of fear and external control built on guns, police and prison. Within such a restrictive social structure, the ordinary child becomes weak and dependent in all its interaction with others thereafter. The primary danger of this unconscious repression is the servitude it breeds in the child to unquestioned external authority.

Servitude

"The danger of servitude does not lie simply in a useless waste of life... but also in the development of reactions which are marked by weakness or perversion."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Discovery of the Child*, p. 58

Compelled to follow the dictates of a predetermined curriculum and mandatory group instruction, the child in the traditional classroom is forced to adopt the role of passive receptive being—to obediently serve the purposes and needs of the adult "teacher". Such docile servitude to external forces necessarily requires the child to forego and neglect its own individual needs and interests. In later life, this neglect of normal development becomes visible in outer form as a diminished self-image dangerously dependent on the many other warped personalities in society.

Warped Personalities

"... man is dependent upon other men... his whole life will be in danger if the personalities of those about him have been warped."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 187-88

Even the most independent-minded individuals must invariably face the common danger of social institutions which are built up by massive numbers of warped personalities. One's own inner search for happiness and self-expression must necessarily reflect itself in the outer drama of uncertain and fragile association and relationship with others. Each day plays out this hidden inner drama of repressed feelings and unknown fears with all the confusion, controversy and conflict of a veritable battlefield.

Battlefront

"The individual treads the path of life, beset with dangers on all sides! Life is a veritable battlefield; one may come through but be crippled and scarred."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *To Ed. the Human Potential*, p. 119

Montessori teaching is a constant challenge to speak out and act boldly for the "normalized" child—a daily battlefield of controversy and conflict with the entrenched forces of repression, prejudice and limited thinking about children and education in society. Montessori teachers must therefore possess a considerable courage, patience and humility to successfully stand firm against the many oppressive influences in society which oppose the reality of Dr. Montessori's vision of a "new education". Such a "new education" not only stands against all forms of repression of the child's true nature, but more significantly, offers tangible, practical answers to the most dangerous problems of modern human development.

Answers to Problems

"A truly scientific education should give answers to problems and not merely point out the difficulties and dangers existing in the common schools..."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Discovery of the Child*, p. 41

The Montessori answer to the problems of traditional education is a scientific approach to the child—a revolutionary "new education" that may be seen most clearly as a way of being committed to three specific principles of nature: i.e., (1) "Observation", (2) "Individual Liberty", and (3) "Preparation of the Environment". These three Montessori principles provide a consistent reliable inner "control of error" to check and correct one's various actions with children on a moment to moment basis—to show how to "control the environment, not the child" so that the "normalized" child will indeed fully emerge. In the Montessori environment, children experience a

process of "normalization" whereby they come to master even the most dangerous problems of life with a true grace and courtesy.

Normalization

"Normalization, therefore, does not consist in hurling oneself into the midst of dangers, but in acquiring a prudence which permits one to recognize and dominate dangers..."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, pg. 172-173

"Normalization" returns the child to a state of complete harmony with its environment so that the child expresses an instinctive alertness and keen awareness to recognize and avoid many otherwise dangerous problem situations. The calm demeanor and inner mental balance of the "normalized" child allows the child to effectively confront and patiently resolve the many dangers and risks of normal human life. True normal being in the face of danger is therefore not so much a matter of bold heroics, but rather an approach of cautious prudence which is ordinarily lacking in even the most mature adults.

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Look for the
November Observer
featuring
Purpose

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Lee Haviv, 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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Moment of Peril

Airplanes, Guns and Swords

from *Observer*, September/1990
by Lee Haviv

Quiet fantasy concerning airplanes, guns and swords (see *Observer*, September/1990) involves no immediate threat of physical harm to the children or objects employed for this purpose. Therefore, one's overall management of the total group would likely direct itself elsewhere to "control the environment, not the child".

When the total group has become stabilized in relative tranquility, calmness and order, the adult may then safely choose to attend more directly to the "moment of peril" arising in Tommy's group fantasy activity. Looking and listening from afar is the first approach to this situation—to attain as much "eye contact" with the children around Tommy (the "hub") as possible. This "eye contact" alone without judgment or negative gestures, will have a very favorable effect over time to delicately disengage the "other children" as a detrimental influence in the environment around Tommy.

Given the lack of "eye contact" after considerable visual scanning from afar, the adult may then quietly and slowly move closer to the scenario to more carefully listen and observe. Kneeling down close to the group, the adult may notice more of the details of the fantasy drama and the conversation among the children involved. If no significant "eye contact" with the children is established from this closer vantage point, the adult may question the children to help uncover the underlying issues in the particular fantasy; e.g., "what is this?" (pointing), "why does that go there?" (pointing), or more generally "what are you doing?". Friendly questions about the "airplanes, guns and swords" will gradually enable the children to resolve their own repressed feelings of fear, discouragement and powerlessness in reality which are being dramatized with those particular objects and concepts.

In time, the children around Tommy will lose interest in the fantasy and then return to activity directed to their real needs and interests in the environment. Without the detrimental attention and involvement of "other children", Tommy too will eventually return to his own normal developmental process.

Ninja Turtles

Five year old Buddy is constantly looking for other children to involve in a game of "Ninja Turtle". Although the other children usually decline his invitation, Buddy remains deeply engaged in the fantasy drama. Even if other children do not play with or watch Buddy in his fantasy drama, he will nonetheless play out the role of "Ninja Turtle" on his own—either by physical activity and gestures, or by drawing the same figures on paper day after day. There is practically no "eye contact" with the teacher. What to do?

Answer in *Observer*, November/1990.

Danger

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Prudence

"... a child naturally confronts dangers and does so with greater readiness than adults... children develop a kind of 'prudence', which enables them to avoid dangers and consequently to live with them."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 172

The "normalized" child faces danger with true skill and prudence—to calmly analyze each new obstacle in its path of development to ascertain the most reasonable, effective resolution possible. In the Montessori "normalizing" environment, children learn to acquire such prudence by a constant exercise of free will in choosing their self-directed activities. The child also acquires a sense of true personal responsibility for the consequences of all its various actions.

Responsibility

"A child... is thus freed from the greatest of all dangers, that of making an adult responsible for his actions."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Discovery of the Child*, p. 93

The adult can never fully protect a child from all the dangers of living in a modern, ever-changing world—no matter how careful and cautious one is in assuming this type of responsibility for children. True safety from harm may only be assured to the extent of the child's own responsibility—free from the constant presence of an imposing adult "teacher". Children in the Montessori environment are therefore free to learn by a process of self-education—to overcome the danger of basic ignorance about life.

Ignorance

"The greatest danger lies in our ignorance..."
Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, 240

The young child normally overcomes the danger of its initial ignorance in life by gradually acquiring knowledge through direct sensorial experience—absorbing its surrounding culture by direct active exploration and experimentation in the environment. Children in the Montessori environment acquire a great quantity of useful knowledge of the universe by following the "teacher within" themselves. The adult assists this "teacher within" by insightful, patient observation—the ultimate way of salvation for the child and humanity itself to escape from the danger of its own distorted purpose and unknown errors.

Way of Salvation

"If one perceives the danger, he may by this mere fact find himself in the way of salvation."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Act*, in Ed., p. 289

Once "normalized", the child is saved from many common dangers in life by its distinctively prudent approach to each new problem situation. This way of salvation to become "normalized" is assured in the child by the Montessori teacher's approach of expanding awareness of the three Montessori principles at those critical moments of peril that arise in

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 1

LETTERS TO IMS

September, 1990

Dear Lee,

Again, I want to thank you for the ("Creating the New Education") conference this August in Columbia... I was just ready to see and hear certain things—open myself to what was right in front of me all this time, which I hadn't been allowing myself to fully experience, appreciate... The issue of how adults abandon children, how we abandon ourselves and consequently block the flow of communication with other adults and hurt children in the process is very important. Your suggestion that I just silently sit and keep observing at school—observing others and myself—has been so helpful to me. Just this morning I spent an hour in the school—observing—and I could really see some things I had never seen before—the projecting of expectations on the child, the abandonment of the child—the subtle pressures... I just silently observed... the need of the adult to be "right", to be "valued" to be validated—and how threatening it felt to just be quiet and try to engage in what was right in front of us... It's really a freeing experience. I've had so little confidence in dealing with these situations—though, now, I still don't exactly know what to "do", I do have confidence that the goals of the Montessori principles are achievable, that my "being" can have a positive effect on the environment....

Kindest Regards,

Kay Marshall
Columbia, South Carolina

September 6, 1990

Dear Lee,

As I was reading the "Observer" the other day, it occurred to me that the paper was not recycled paper. I think it would be in the best interest of us all if you could look into purchasing your paper supply from a recycling plant.

Gratefully,

Cassie Snider
Toledo, Ohio

Ed. Note: Recycled paper is about 30% more expensive. The Society will print its "Observer" on recycled paper if readers will donate enough additional contributions towards the "Recycled Paper" fund. Send your contributions to the Society for this purpose, specifying "recycled paper".



Reflections...

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 2

who pull me back together. I give up—then one of them finds a way to encourage me.

I want to tell you about a case this summer. It is only one among many, but it is important because it was a turning point for all of us.

I was upstairs. I could hear David and Kali arguing downstairs. At first I thought it might blow over, but it only intensified. When I went downstairs, I found they were fighting over Kali's stuffed rabbit. Evidently, David had taken the rabbit away from Kali...

At first I just observed them. Then I began to inquire into their fantasy misbehavior. "Why do you want the rabbit?" "Whose rabbit is it?" etc., etc. They both got louder and louder, screaming things like, "It's mine," or "I hate you." My head was whirling. Then I thought of a different question. "What does this rabbit represent?" They both seemed a little stunned by the question. They were quiet for a couple of seconds, then began again just as loudly as before. I kept asking, "What does the rabbit

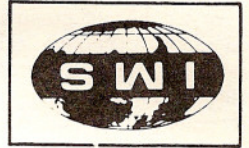
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Proceedings of meeting of Americans for Choice in Education (ACE), held on September 12, 1990 in Washington, D.C. Pictured from left are: Therese Syren (Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights), Robert Marlowe (Citizens for Educational Freedom), Mary Catherine Pegis (ACE Sec./Treas.), Mae Duggan (ACE vice-chairperson), and Dr. Daniel McGarry (ACE newsletter editor).

The Ben Scott Show ... In appreciation

On September 8, 1990, listeners, callers and guests of the *Ben Scott Show* (WVOC-AM radio, Columbia, South Carolina) hosted an appreciation party in honor of Ben Scott for his important contribution to dialogue and stimulating public debate on controversial topics in the community. Kay Marshall and others associated with the local College of Early Learning were instrumental in coordinating this event

Lee Havis, Society executive director, was the last guest on the *Ben Scott Show* in July, 1990. Havis was interviewed at that time about the South Carolina Montessori conference (August, 1990). This guest appearance also featured a lively telephone dialogue about Montessori education with callers from the local area.

The *Ben Scott Show* was noteworthy for its courage to take on challenging ideas and thought-provoking inquiry. Besides Montessori education, the *Ben Scott Show* offered the "inside story" on many events in the community from the perspective of lives that were directly affected. One program featured a direct personal account of a teenager's dramatic struggle for individual liberty amid the forces of conflicting adult institutions and personalities.

Kay Marshall described the *Ben Scott Show* as a "people's forum" in which individual members of Columbia's various 'subcommunities' who used to talk about each other, learned how to talk to each other." Ben Scott's respectful manner and insightful questioning was an important aspect of this show's particular success and value to the community.

Danger

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various circumstances of misbehavior and disorder. This new being as "commitment to Montessori principles" is activated in times of peril by the inner strength and power of one's simple conscious thought.

Strength

"Each human being possesses the strength of becoming aware of and of facing the dangers, the temptations of the world so as to become innured to them in order to overcome them."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *From Child. to Adolescence*, p. 135

Even in the face of considerable risk of harm or injury, one may still call on strength within to create the "being" that allows the "normalized" child to emerge—by simply thinking of the three Montessori principles. With constant practice, this inner strength of conscious thought grows even stronger as one assumes more responsibility with others in the process of creating the "new education". Such an expansive Montessori teaching thereby reaches far beyond the immediate circumstances of some specific incident or event—to free the human spirit to ultimately overcome the many serious dangers that otherwise so imperil mankind in this modern world.

Reflections . . .

Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 3

represent?" , maybe 3 or 4 more times. Little Kali was the one who answered. "It's love, it's love. We both want love." All was still for what seemed to be about a minute. David stood still, holding the rabbit high over his head. Then, he gently handed the rabbit to Kali. He sat down and seemed to be in deep thought for the next few minutes. The look on his face was not of a child pouting about having to hand over a toy that he wanted, the look was of one thinking and questioning. There have been many enlightening incidents this summer, but this one seemed to pave the way for more openness.

Positions & Placements

Montessori Teacher: elementary (6-12), for fall, 1990. Well-equipped classroom, Salary open. Call: (804) 930-9545: Peninsula Montessori School, 12749 Nettles Dr., Newport News, VA 23606.