



# The Montessori OBSERVER

*Expectations*

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## Site Plan Approved for New Montessori Center

On August 2, 1990, the Prince George's County Planning Board (state of Maryland) approved a site plan for the operation of the new Powder Mill Montessori Center located in Beltsville, Maryland. The program will be operated by the International Montessori Trust to serve a single group of about 20 children aged 2-6. A full-day session from 7-6 daily for working parents and a school-day session from 9-3 will be provided.

The new Powder Mill Montessori Center will be recognized by the International Montessori Society and function with a complete commitment to Montessori principles throughout all aspects of its program operation. Lee Havis will directly supervise the operation of this program which will serve as a demonstration project and model for other activity and work of the International Montessori Trust. Havis stated that "this project will help to test out basic operating procedures for a Montessori program, particularly in dealing with such obstacles as government regulations, staff development and enrollment. At present, these three obstacles have proven difficult to overcome in the operation of Montessori schools which are based completely on one's 'commitment to Montessori principles'."

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## Reflections...

by Toni Hammond  
(Roswell, Georgia)

### —The Society's Conference "Creating the New Education"

Attending the two-day "Creating the New Education" conference is challenging, and not at all the normal 'conference' experience. The first day is spent revealing scenarios we wish to resolve, exploring the idea of 'personality' as a detrimental influence along with 'objects' and 'other children'. We look at 'observation' as a key for resolving the misbehavior—first within ourselves and, as day follows night, within the classroom or home.

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Proceedings of the Society's "Creating the New Education" conference held in Columbia, South Carolina on August 4-5, 1990.

## Conference in Columbia, South Carolina ... A Few More Golden Moments

On August 4-5, 1990, the Society conducted its most recent two-day "Creating the New Education" conference in Columbia, South Carolina. This fourth such South Carolina conference included the participation of persons from the states of Georgia, Virginia, Texas, Rhode Island and South Carolina. In addition, several persons attended from the Rhein-Maine Schule in Wiesbaden, Germany.

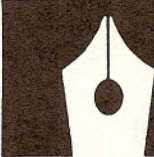
Lee Havis, Society executive director, led the conference discussion in an analysis of various practical situations and examples with children—to show how to apply Montessori principles to "control the environment, not the child". He particularly emphasized the "symbolic" nature of events and situations in the conference—that disputes and dramatic emotionality during the conference are "analogies" and symbolic "representations" of the ordinary underlying drama of one's life and circumstances outside of the conference. He stated that "the conference brings to consciousness the nature of the hidden repressive drama and prejudices of the 'adult personality'—so that one may thereafter exercise a more conscious control of its detrimental expression with children."

The South Carolina conference graphically revealed this hidden tendency of the "adult personality" to repress, tyrannize and control the child in "moments of peril"—to unconsciously violate such fundamental principles as "individual liberty". Havis indicated that "complete 'individual liberty' is often denied in circumstances of severe misbehavior

and disorder under the misguided belief that such repression is somehow necessary to respect the true interests and needs of the total group. However, true 'respect' for the total group cannot be achieved by the adult's physical force, manipulation, coercion or control of a misbehaving child. The teacher who forcibly removes a misbehaving child from the group is violating that child's 'individual liberty'—even if this repressive action is premised on some purpose of later private discussion with the child, enforcement of involuntary 'time out' procedures or teacher-made 'ground rules'. A violation of one child's 'individual liberty' is a violation of all in the group—a detrimental influence of the 'adult personality' which diminishes the capacity for true 'normalization' of all the children. The proper response to the first moment of disorder and disharmony of a misbehaving child is most often just to 'stand and watch'."

The August, 1990 conference continued the Society's commitment to this type of inner preparation so vitally needed for effective Montessori teaching—offering a few more golden moments of self-examination with others to renew and reinforce supportive relationships built up through prior Society conferences and other forms of Montessori teacher preparation. The local College of Early Learning in Columbia, South Carolina was instrumental in the success of this most recent important step forward for the "new education" in the world—providing vital local support and cooperation

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# Expectations

by Lee Haviv

*"... the conclusions reached from the revelations given by the children in our schools have far surpassed our fondest expectations."*

Maria Montessori

from *Discovery of the Child*, p. ix

In 1907 when Dr. Montessori started her first "Children's House" experiment with young children, she did not expect to discover the child's true nature as being in complete harmony with its environment. Unexpectedly, the child simply revealed itself with qualities such as spontaneous self-discipline, independence, precocious intelligence, love of order and sentiments of sympathy for others. Teachers now intentionally set out to duplicate Dr. Montessori's scientific approach to the child so that its true "normal" being will express itself through similar forms of unexpected activity.

## Unexpected Activity

*"Directly these children found themselves under conditions of real life... unexpected activities seemed to awaken within them."*

Maria Montessori

from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 171

Within the real life conditions of choice and independence that Dr. Montessori created for children, she observed many remarkably unexpected activities; e.g., working in silent concentration for long periods of time, showing extraordinary patience and social harmony with each other, and demonstrating spontaneous self-discipline and independence without adult control or direction. Montessori teachers now expect to see this same type of "normalized" behavior in children as they freely choose their activity from a wide range of interests in the environment. Such "normalized" behavior is expressed in the relatively easy work of "practical life" as well as in the more abstract levels of learning associated with subjects such as mathematics and language.

## Easy Work

*"It is the pre-existent known which excites expectations and opens the door to the novel unknown; and it is the already present 'easy work' which opens new ways for penetration, and puts the attention into a state of expectation."*

Maria Montessori

from *Spontaneous Act. in Ed.*, p. 158

Children prepare for advanced intellectual activity by developing a basic mental order through their concentration on tasks such as cleaning or sweeping—easy "practical life" work which is the normal beginning point for the child's more advanced exploration and self-teaching in the environment. The well-ordered materials of the Montessori environment accustom the child to such order in the universe which then becomes an expectation in all its further exploration and self-directed activity. In traditional education, such self-teaching and free exploration of the environment is generally denied because children are expected instead to follow only the order and sequence of a teacher-directed curriculum.

## Traditional Expectations

*"... a teacher commands because he is strong and expects a child to obey because he is weak."*

Maria Montessori

from *Discovery of the Child*, p. ix

The traditional teacher expects obedience because of the child's relative weakness and presumed lack of knowledge and constructive inner guidance. The child's normal development is therefore considerably restricted by the adult's ordinary approach to enforce discipline by such repressive means as punishment, manipulation and control. Since Montessori teaching recognizes the child as having a "teacher within" to guide its own learning, obedience normally develops of itself over time as a spontaneous instinct towards harmony and order in the social group.

## Obedience

*"... obedience... shows itself spontaneous and unexpectedly at the end of a long period of maturation."*

Maria Montessori

from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 257

Children develop normal obedience to the needs and interests of others only after their own inner needs for mental order have been fully met through the process of "normalization". Once "normalized", children will eventually show a spontaneous obedience in being with others—a sentiment for cooperation and social order which far surpasses the ordinary politeness of adult society. Older children normally mature beyond this basic obedience to develop an even higher form of responsibility with others—a sense of real self-confidence.

## Self-Confidence

*"The chief symptom of adolescence is a state of expectations, a tendency towards creative work and a need for the strengthening of self-confidence."*

Maria Montessori

from *From Child. to Adolescence*, p. 101

In preparation for the rigors of adult life, the adolescent must develop a strong self-confidence to face the many imposing influences of negative social pressure. Without this self-confidence, one becomes unduly dependent on others—reduced to the impotent role of "victim of society" to either play out some futile symbolic drama or to engage in mere academic speculation. By contrast, the new "normalized" child prepares itself to meet the unexpected dangers and difficulties of adult society with a calm manner and prudent self-control—a basic self-confidence acquired during early childhood by the preservation of a vigorous soul.

## Vigorous Soul

*"The trials life has in store for us are unforeseen, unexpected; no one can prepare us directly to meet them; it is only a vigorous soul that can be prepared for everything."*

Maria Montessori

from *Spontaneous Act. in Ed.*, p. 168

The Montessori environment protects and nurtures the young child's vigorous soul by

encouraging its instinctive independence and basic character. The adult creates this nurturing spiritual environment by following a commitment to three fundamental underlying principles of nature; e.g., (1) "Observation"; (2) "Individual Liberty"; and (3) "Preparation of the Environment"—three basic Montessori principles which reliably guide and direct one's entire thought and action with children on behalf of the child's true normal development. Such Montessori teaching follows an entirely new way of thinking about children—a radical departure from the ordinary adult field of consciousness which is so completely unprepared to accept the whole idea of the "normalized" child.

## The Unprepared Field

*"... an idea cannot enter triumphantly into the consciousness... It is necessary that the field of consciousness should be not only free but 'expectant'. He who is bewildered by a chaos of ideas cannot accept a truth which arrives unexpectedly in the unprepared field."*

Maria Montessori

from *Spontaneous Act. in Ed.*, p. 233

Adults do not ordinarily see the "normalized" child because of an inner confusion of prejudicial thoughts, attitudes and beliefs—an

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Look for the  
**October Observer**  
featuring  
**Danger**

## The Montessori Observer

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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

### Sharing

from *Observer*, May/1990  
by Lee Havis

*"Even if two children want the same material, they should be left to settle the problem for themselves unless they call for the teacher's aid."*

Maria Montessori  
from Ed. for a *New World*, p. 88

Two children fighting over a single object (see *Observer*, May/1990) presents the common problem of "sharing". The ordinary adult impulse is to eagerly intrude to impose a "fair" solution; however, Montessori teaching in such a *moment of peril* requires a much more careful analysis of the environment.

Nicholas has eye contact with the teacher, while the offending "perpetrator" does not. The "perpetrator" is therefore more readily seen as the "hub" for purposes of analysis. The teacher's eye contact with the "other child" (Nicholas) is often quite sufficient to effectively control this element of the environment and also the "adult personality". Since the "physical object" in dispute can only be effectively controlled by the teacher's physical movement to the scene, this action would be ordinarily withheld, in deference to the larger responsibility for visual scanning of the total group of children.

By sustaining "eye contact" along with Nicholas in such a situation, the Montessori teacher gives the entire scene a chance to work itself out as the children struggle between themselves for their own solution. If the danger of abuse of the "physical object" or physical harm to one of the children becomes too serious, the teacher may need to physically approach the situation to more actively observe and "control" the environment. In such a situation, the teacher might reach out and firmly hold the object in dispute (not jerking it out of either child's hand, but merely stabilizing the movement). This direct control of the "physical object" tends to facilitate verbal and non-verbal communication between the children. The child who is less "committed" to possession of the object will usually peacefully retire to interest itself elsewhere in the environment.

The detrimental influence of the "adult personality" in these types of "sharing" scenarios with young children is usually highly charged with righteous indignation and the adult prejudice that such children are "too little" to effectively resolve their problem among themselves. Accordingly, one must ordinarily restrain the tendency to talk at such times. With eye contact and a firm hand on the "physical object", the conflict of sharing is usually most effectively worked out by the children themselves—with the beneficial result of an important step towards their independence, harmony and self-discipline in the social setting.

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### Expectations

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unprepared field of consciousness in which the child is expected to emerge only according to one's prejudicial thoughts about what is "normal" behavior. By focusing one's attention on the three Montessori principles, the adult creates an entirely separate and distinct field of consciousness which views the child as an essential "unknown entity". However, even with this type of distinctive field of consciousness, the expected "normalized" child does not immediately appear because of the many unconscious obstacles which yet persist behind one's over-sanguine expectations.

### Over-sanguine Expectations

*"During the first days when a school is opened we may consider a certain initial disorder as characteristic, especially if the teacher is making her first experiment, and consequently is handicapped by her over-sanguine expectations."*

Maria Montessori  
from Spontaneous Act. in Ed., p. 87

The new Montessori teacher expecting "normalized" behavior in children is often at first quite disappointed and surprised to find just the opposite—an initial increase in disorder and misbehavior. To successfully face these over-sanguine expectations, one must practice a considerable patience to effectively remove the detrimental influence of "adult personality" in the child's environment. Without an effective form of continuing training and experience, teachers tend to yield in time to the force of their own ingrained prejudices—to give up entirely on the essential truth of "normality" as a practical reality.

### Training and Experience

*"The great majority of teachers, in the absence of sufficient training and experience, end by thinking that the 'new child', so eagerly expected and of whom so much has been said, is nothing but a myth or an ideal."*

Maria Montessori  
from Spontaneous Act. in Ed., p. 270

Training and experience in Montessori teaching must develop such inner qualities as patience and humility—a spiritual preparation to overcome the many ingrained assumptions and prejudices about what is "normal" and "expected" in a child's behavior. Since no amount of training and experience can hope to entirely erase the deeply rooted repressive tendencies of one's limited being as "personality", Montessori teacher education is most effectively directed to the distinction of being that is "commitment to Montessori principles"—a continuous process of expanding conscious awareness of the three Montessori principles. Such a profound inner preparation necessarily focuses attention on the essential cause and source of reality within oneself.

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### Site Plan Approved

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 1

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

## Positions & Placements

**Position Wanted:** for a lady teacher, B.A., B.Ed., T.E.S.L., 15 years experience with 3-12 yr. Students. Write to: S.M.P. Menike, Z 100, Mahe, Seychelles (Indian Ocean).

### Reflections . . .

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The first day usually ends with incompleteness, confusion, some anger or impatience at the process being undertaken as slow or irrelevant. By the end of the second day, most issues are resolved and participants go away with new pathways of thinking opened up as it relates to misbehavior of children. Some have said "it has changed my life", others have said, "I wasn't sure what I was doing here at the end of the first day, but by the end of the conference, I understood things I had never known before about children and about myself."

One of the things that I have always come away with is a desire for the staff at our school to learn from the conference format a way for us to interact together to resolve issues of misbehavior that face us. This is not to affix blame, there really is none, but rather to be clear on what we are actually "doing" by our actions and keep them in harmony with the goals we want to accomplish as Montessori teachers.

While it is true, some leave the conference not agreeing with the premise, not seeing the value of the time spent, not sure of what went on: I feel it is just not their time to see. Often they become enmeshed in the "personality" of the presenter and bear a long and grievous resentment of him and anything he or the organization he represents has to say thereafter. It is unfortunate. The presenter is only the bearer of the sad truth that what we see is what we are. Some are not so glad to hear this news, and the presenter becomes the focus of the anger. Past civilizations have killed the bearers of unwanted news under the hopes that what was presented will go away and not come to pass.

Advance preparation and openness are important to getting something of value from the conference. We can see only as much as we prepare ourselves and are willing to see. I have observed many people who have gone to the conference, and have then seen the changes for the better in their lives afterwards. I have also heard people who say they didn't get anything out of it or hated it, use the "self-same words" and ideas presented at the conference. As for me, I always come away renewed and recommitted to preparing an environment where the child can truly be free to manifest the wonderful traits that are within him. The conference has always improved my ability to understand and apply Montessori principles with my children.

Toni Hammond is director and owner of the Hammond school, a recognized Montessori school in the Atlanta, Georgia area. She has attended many Society conferences since they were first offered in 1986—and has supported the attendance of her staff. Toni Hammond is also a student in the Society's Montessori teacher education program.

Address correction requested

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## Expectations

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### Inner Preparation

"... a teacher must prepare himself interiorly by systematically studying himself so that he can tear out his most deeply rooted defects... In order to discover these subconscious failings, we have need of a special kind of instruction. We must see ourselves as another sees us."

Maria Montessori  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 149

Montessori teaching requires a constant inner preparation—a form of experiential learning which is far beyond the ordinary expectations of knowledge and skill arising with "certification" from traditional academic study and its related practice teaching. Without a true inner preparation directed to the three Montessori principles, subconscious failings of "personality" tend to persist as a default self-image in opposition to the emergence of the child's true nature. Montessori teaching therefore requires the type of self-examination whereby one's personality is observed indirectly in the personality of others—an expansive social interaction which ultimately functions to create a whole new age for mankind.

### The New Age

"New generations will experience a new age when misery will... be destroyed."

Maria Montessori  
from *Discovery of the Child*, p. 330

Dr. Montessori recognized her "new education" as the essential basis for a whole "new age" for mankind—to reveal man's true nature of love, unity and harmony in the world. She saw the "normalization" of the child as a great hope for fundamental change in society because of its universal nature and practical application to all circumstances. As individuals create their own being as "commitment to Montessori principles" with children now, the new "normalized" child will thereby gradually emerge in reality to confirm and sustain one's highest and most positive expectations for the future of humanity.



Participants of Society's conference in Columbia, South Carolina (August 4-5, 1990). Left to right are: Sasha Kennison (Columbia, SC), David Kennison (Columbia, SC) and Bonnie Sanders (Fredericksburg, VA).

### Moment of Peril

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#### Airplanes, Guns and Swords

Four year old Tommy and several other children habitually congregate together to quietly manipulate simple blocks as they converse with each other about making airplanes, guns and swords. Although their activity is quiet, these are the same children who engage with fantasy together ("play") in the outdoor environment. Tommy and his "group" rarely if ever look up at the teacher for eye contact. What to do?  
*Answer in Observer, October/1990.*

### Conference in Columbia

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 2

for all aspects of this event. Further such conferences will be scheduled according to interest that is expressed to the Society for this purpose. Contact the Society if you would like to have a "Creating the New Education" conference in your own local area: IMS, 912 Thayer Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20910, Tel. (301) 589-1127.

### LETTERS TO IMS

June 6, 1990

Dear Lee,

... I am enclosing herewith a list of some school names and individuals who are interested in following the Montessori method truly. I hope you will get their support to begin planning for a Montessori conference here and we will ... further discuss how we could work together for the "new education".

Your faithfully,

Sabita Ghosh  
Calcutta, India

July 10, 1990

Dear Lee,

... how much I value the strong philosophical base you have given me through the course (Montessori teacher education program). It is not fading away at all. Rather, I find that in this year since I finally completed my course work, the three principles have remained in bold relief in my consciousness, and I am committed to making them live in my work with children ...

Sincerely,

Jude McAlevy (IMS '89)  
Palm Springs, California