



The Montessori

## OBSERVER

Hope

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## Resolution to Withdraw Accreditation Regulations

The Americans for Choice in Education (ACE) is presently considering the adoption of a resolution "to withdraw federal recognition regulations over accreditation agencies". Lee Havis, ACE coalition president, is seeking consensus approval for this resolution by the full ACE membership of over forty diverse organizations throughout the United States.

The resolution would seek to withdraw the recognition regulations because of their tendency to "discourage and restrict competition, free market enterprise and individual choice in the field of education." Havis believes that current regulations are so restrictive and burdensome in their requirements of recognition, that the most innovative, creative and non-traditional educational institutions are effectively barred from any conventional recognized accreditation.

In the field of Montessori teacher education, federal recognition of a non-inclusive, traditional type of accreditation agency would deter many forms of constructive experimental-

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## Reflections...

Paul Posillo, (Ashaway, Rhode Island)

Paul Posillo is a student in the Society's teacher education program.

## That Feelingful Moment

I subbed in a third grade class today...In the morning when the children first came in, one of the girls, Amy, was standing in front of me with a small group of other children. She was telling me things and asking me questions. After a minute or two, one of the other children spoke out and said, "Don't mind her. She's always like this. She talks all the time." The bell rang and they took their seats.

The students were left specific paper work to be done on their own which they did with little trouble. However, when the paper work was completed, individual and collective physical and vocal momentum began to build...I observed. Some children were working well independently while others were running around the room playing some violent war-type game. Amy was the most physically rowdy - running,

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Lee Havis leading discussion at the "Creating the New Education" conference in Atlanta, Georgia, (May 16-17, 1992)

## Montessori Conferences Creating the "New Education"

New York, New York... May 2-3, 1992

On May 2-3, 1992, the Society conducted its "Creating the New Education" conference in New York -- the third such conference in that state since 1986. Participating were parents and teachers from the Forest Hills Montessori School (Forest Hills, NY). In addition, other interested persons attended from the states of New York, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Maryland and Virginia.

Conducted by Lee Havis, this latest New York conference emphasized the importance of cooperative support for children in their various activities to become initially interested and

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Atlanta, Georgia... May 16-17, 1992

The Atlanta, Georgia "Creating the New Education" conference was attended by interested persons from the states of Georgia, South Carolina, New York, Texas and Missouri. The conference discussion focussed primary attention on creating trust in the adult-child relationship.

Lee Havis, discussion leader, stated that "rules and techniques are insufficient basis for creating an effective bond of trust with children. In the face of misbehavior and disorder, the teacher must exercise careful judgement for creative action and language in accordance with Montessori principles. Effective action tends to emerge as 'instinctive' when there is a state of calm and peace within the teacher."

Conference discussion also brought out how thoughts can be directed to noticing one's own feelings and focussing attention on what is being communicated between the adult and child. Havis stated that "when the adult's language is guided by thoughtful commitment to Montessori principles, rather than impulsive feelings of impatience for immediate external results, a gradual sense of trust will develop in the adult-child relationship. With such trust, further communication becomes more harmonious, peaceful and cooperative. This sense of trust is a vital initial condition for the child's rapport with the teacher and its eventual normalization through work and materials."

## Montessori Conference Creating the New Education

Edinburg, Texas  
October 10-11, 1992

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. Early registration completed eight (8) weeks prior to the conference date is \$170 per person (\$130, members).

Send registration fee to: International Montessori Society, 912 Thayer Ave., Silver Spring, Maryland 20910, Tel. (301) 589-1127

# Hope

By Lee Havis

*"This is the hope we have – a hope in a new humanity that will come from this new education."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Reconstruction in Education*, p. 14

Dr. Montessori hoped for a new humanity which would reflect the fundamental character changes she observed in young children in her special "normalizing" environment. Transformed from disorder, inattention and fantasy to a "normalized" state of calm, self-disciplined order and harmony, this visionary new "normalized" child remains the hoped-for discovery of all Montessori teachers today in their daily classroom experience. Such a "new child" arises not from adult teaching but rather as a result of the child's own instinctive driving force for peace and harmony with its entire environment.

## Driving Force

*"...the child has been revealed as a driving force that can bring new hope to people engulfed in darkness."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Discovery of the Child*, p. 40

Montessori teaching allows the child's own true nature to freely emerge in the world -- a powerful driving force for the solution of all the age-old problems of civilization. The adult's function to serve this purpose is to collaborate with the "teacher within" the child by creating a suitable supportive external environment -- committed to fundamental principles of nature. Lacking this type of committed environment, the child is left to the hopeless struggle of a repressive traditional education.

## Traditional Education

*"...if education is always to be conceived along the same antiquated lines of a mere transmission of knowledge, there is little to be hoped from it for bettering man's future..."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 4

Ordinary education imposes an adult-controlled curriculum and group instruction which fundamentally opposes the child's own individual process of learning. Dominated by prejudices about the child as being either "bad" or "empty", traditional teaching subjects the child to the adult's own limited viewpoint and perspective of reality. Within such a restrictive learning environment, children face a hopeless impasse to achieving the ultimate perfection of the human personality.

## Hopeless Impasse

*"We wanted a perfect humanity; we thought that humanity had to become perfect by imitating us; but we were imperfect, so there was a hopeless impasse."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Education for a New World*, p. 56

By imitating imperfect adult behavior, children cannot hope to achieve their ultimate self-perfection in the world. Adult "teaching" tends to limit the child to the restrictive forms of knowledge and prejudicial learning of the past. Even the best of teacher education cannot fully overcome this hopeless impasse, since age-old prejudices constantly oppose the process of altering adults at a fundamental level of being.

## Altering Adults

*"The hope of altering adults is therefore vain...we can easily hurt or humiliate them; make them conscious of their defects. But the faults remain, for they are ingrained and unchangeable."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 65

Since adult personality is essentially fixed during early childhood, teachers tend to unconsciously express this limited "reality" to children despite their best efforts to the contrary. Even the most committed adults make unknown mistakes with children because of the persistent nature of one's reactive patterns of thought and action. Such patterns are reflected outwardly by the very fabric of adult society -- so that even the most courageous of individual efforts are constantly opposed by a pervasive default mind-set of massive ignorance and widespread prejudice.

## Individual Efforts

*"It is foolish to hope or even imagine that theoretical reforms or individual efforts can fill a void as that which has been made in the world through the oppression of children."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 207

Society's far-reaching oppression of children tends to diminish the impact of individual efforts at fundamental social reform. The child is oppressed by subtle hidden prejudices which are widely shared and supported as unquestioned truth in society. Within this type of systematic repression of the "normalized" child, the external world provides no hope for the ultimate perfection of mankind.

## The External World

*"We can thus place no hope in the external world until the normalization of man is recognized as a basic social need."*

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

Organized social institutions, government and mass media symbolize the external world which can either discourage or support the basic idea of "normalization" of the child. Without such support, the individual Montessori teacher must nurture one's own inner reality of the "normalized" child through whatever limited forms of social opportunities may be available for this purpose -- to associate with others to explore and expand one's commitment to the three fundamental Montessori principles: (1) "Observation"; (2) "Individual Liberty"; and (3) "Preparation of the Environment". Such a committed way of being is the starting point of real hope to correcting fundamental defects in children.

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*Look for the  
September Observer  
featuring  
Happiness*

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Lee Havis, Executive Director

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## Moment of Peril

### Separating from Mother

from *Observer, March, 1992*  
by Lee Haviv

When a young child is unwilling to easily separate from mother on the first day of school (see *Observer, March, 1992*), the "adult personality" of the teacher is a primary detrimental influence in the environment. How to control this element in the environment is considerably complicated when another adult personality (i.e., "mother") is likewise involved in the scenario.

Separating from mother is particularly difficult when there is an acting out of "dependency" at this time, i.e., the mother doing unnecessary things for the child and otherwise drawing undue attention to herself. The Montessori teacher in this scenario has attempted to "interest" the child in some work, but the mother continues to interrupt these efforts with her own dependency reactions and manipulation of the child.

One possible resolution of this situation is to "slow down" the process of separation by requesting that the mother come back into the room - to "let go" of the child to allow a better opportunity for the child to become more involved in some piece of work. Once the mother has left, the teacher may hold the door to prevent the child from leaving on it's own - while offering comfort and re-direction for the child away from the painful drama of "separation" from its mother.

At times, a child will "miss" its mother during the day and some urgent need for direct communication may arise. In this situation, the teacher can gently ask what the child wishes to communicate to mother and thereby help to resolve the painful underlying feelings through this indirect form of communication. Otherwise, the teacher may re-direct the child away from the frustrating emotional drama of "separation" by focussing attention on some opportunity to work in the environment.

As always, once the child becomes interested and involved with some piece of work, the emotional drama of dependency/separation with mother will diminish and eventually disappear.

### Abusing Materials

Three year old Johnny shows little interest in the materials - except to abuse them by throwing them down and engaging in various forms of fantasy. When the teacher approaches to direct Johnny in their proper use and return to the shelf, Johnny seems to abuse the materials even more to engage in some sort of "power struggle" for control of the environment with the teacher. The teacher is generally

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## Hope

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### Correcting Defects

*"As to...the hopes that we may entertain of correcting children's defects, we may place those acquired in the postnatal period, from 0 to 3, as being curable in practice during the period from 3 to 6, when nature is still busy in the perfecting of many newly formed powers."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 195-96

The adult's "commitment to Montessori principles" creates the suitable environment for young children to correct their character defects which arose from prior detrimental experiences during infancy. Such a "normalizing" environment enables the young child to perfect its character far beyond the limitations and prejudices of the ordinary adult personality. To create such a committed environment, Montessori teachers must constantly expand their "being" to resolve their underlying prejudices which relate to such issues as obtaining obedience.

### Obtaining Obedience

*"...resistance is so strong that it can make us give up any hope of obtaining obedience."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Discovery of the Child*, p. 314

Adults who constantly fail to obtain cooperation and obedience from children can easily feel hopeless in their efforts at applying Montessori principles. Lacking sufficient successful experience in Montessori teaching, many committed adults may well lose sight of any practical possibility for the true "normalization" of children they supervise. Only with devoted practice and experience does one become a skilled and effective interpreter for the child in the world.

### The Interpreter

*"An interpreter is needed for the child and his language...the interpreter is to the child a great hope, opening to him a door which the world has closed."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Education for a New World*, p. 47

Montessori teachers interpret the child's language and behavior -- to listen and respond to all forms of its communication of need and interest. In this way, the child has a real help to develop its own inner power and ability for self-creative development and learning in the environment. With constant reference to the three Montessori principles to guide one's expansive being with children, the adult allows the "normalized" child to fully emerge as a new vision of hope for all humanity.

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## LETTERS TO IMS

Dear Lee:

I wanted to thank you for a weekend that was rich in heart. ("Creating the New Education" conference, New York, May 2-3, 1992). What began as a journey into thought and idea, ended as an experience of the "guts" of teaching and learning -- and thanks to the courage and willingness of a roomful of, what were strangers, daring to dig that deep and go beyond the theory.

Again and again, it seems to come down to who "we" are. If we are trapped and limited, then we can only offer our limitations to the children in our care... Thanks for the forum to go beyond our individual struggles and bring the battles to the light of day and share them with each other. The sincerity of the group created an atmosphere of trust and love where some of the hang-ups and limitations could be left behind. As such it was a significant time for those of us who felt to do that. Like layers of an onion skin coming off! We have more to remove - but boy! - did we make a good start!

I hope that we can continue our journey together... To all of us that seek to know and to become: to all of us who, without the true parenting that we know in our hearts was missing from our own lives and yet still seek to become that ourselves -- despite our limitations -- I send a prayer of hope, of friendship and love. Let's support each other in that pioneering work!... Thanks again Lee! Thanks for being a key element in that work.

Shirley Miho  
Pleasantville, New York

Dear Lee,

May 4, 1992

Wonderful conference! ("Creating the New Education" conference, New York, May 2-3, 1992)... I am still in profound feeling today. I have experienced significant improvement and changes in my communicating... My body, my voice, and my words have become like a true Montessori lesson - calm, clear, concise, direct, brief, simple, not dramatized, and truthful in thoughts, feelings, and concerns with respect to both my internal and external environment... I credit the conference for helping me to evolve and mature in this area.

I went to the conference with only the experience of having experienced profound changes as a result of participation in past conferences and the belief that this conference would do the same... I came away from the conference with something totally unexpected -- myself, externalized in my improved communication. Thank you for creating the environment that encouraged and allowed this to happen.

Paul Posillo  
Ashaway, Rhode Island

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The Montessori



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## Resolution

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sori teacher preparation. Barred from recognized accreditation, unconventional training institutions might also be adversely effected by the prejudicial discrimination of state and local licensing authorities which look to federal recognition as guidance to their own practices.

Lee Havis stated that "the federal government can assure its oversight responsibility for federal funding in education by more effective means than "recognition" of specific accreditation agencies. Less restrictive, more reasonable means must replace the current "recognition" system which has such a destructive effect on creative activity in education training. One possible alternative would be to establish minimum student placement and completion percentage requirements for institutions seeking federal funds. Another alternative would be to allocate funds directly to the states for their own discretionary allocation to applicable students and institutions. In any case, the present federal "recognition" standards appear to have little practical effect in assuring the wise and efficient allocation of federal grants and student loan funding in education.

Havis invites support and cooperation for the widespread adoption of the proposed ACE resolution by all interested persons. To receive a copy of the resolution for inspection and more detailed information, contact: Lee Havis, President, ACE, 927 South Walter Reed Drive, Suite #1, Arlington, VA 22204. Tel: 703-486-8311.

## Moment of Peril

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unable to directly "control" the abused materials because of the child's tendency to move away whenever the teacher approaches.

What to do?

Answer in Observer, September, 1992

## Positions & Placements

Elementary Montessori Teacher: (6-12) for flourishing school of 110 (50 elementary) children. School is thirteen years old and growing. Future plans for a satellite school. Staff includes seven full-time and five part-time teachers. Located in Central Louisiana. Contact: Rosemary Robertson-Smith, Educational Director, Montessori Educational Center, 1717 Jackson Street, Alexandria, LA 71301-6433, Tel. (318) 445-0138 or 445-2116.

## Reflections

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chasing, grabbing other children, pulling them down to the floor and holding them there. I made her the focus of my attention and verbally stressed to her the danger of running in that room.

Amy grabbed a child by the arm, pulled him to the floor and held him there. I held the other child's arm, looked at Amy and firmly but quietly and gently said, "Let go of his arm." After a moment's pause, she let go and they both stood facing each other about four feet apart. I looked at the other child and said quietly, "Why is she doing that to you?" Amy burst into tears. The tears flowed in huge droplets down her face. As the tears poured from her eyes, she told the other child how he always made fun of her, took her things and did other awful things. The other child sporadically held eye contact with Amy while at the same time denying the allegations. The truth was out. All that play was symbolic of the real underlying pain.

A half hour of silent reading was next. Amy laid on her belly on the floor under a table alone with tears still flowing from her eyes for the next half hour. She intermittently spoke to me and told me things during that time. From that feelingful moment of bursting into tears onward, the rest of the day went very well and the children had a real rapport with me.

## New York Conference

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involved in work with materials. Havis stated that "before concentration on individual work, children cannot be entirely left alone to their own devices in the environment. The children need to feel the constant supportive presence of a cooperative adult."

The conference participants analyzed various misbehavior scenarios with children -- by engaging in dramatic re-creations from their own real-life situations with children. Havis stated that "this type of dramatic presentation allows us to see more clearly the specific problem -- far beyond what is possible by simple explanation and academic discussion. With this experiential approach, we can sense more of the real feelings and emotions that are present in the actual problem situation. From such drama, an effective alternative action for resolution seems to emerge more instinctively by itself."

## Hope

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## A New Vision

"The child brings us great hope and a new vision."

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from Absorbent Mind, p. 66

The hope of Montessori education is based on the central reality of the "normalized" child -- a visionary new way of being for mankind to transcend the limitations of past human experience. The "new child" reveals a level of complete harmony with its total environment that promises to resolve the many complex problems of civilization which have plagued mankind throughout history. Committed to fundamental principles of nature, the Montessori teacher expands beyond the ordinary limited way of being which is bound by countless hidden prejudices -- to enter upon a new way of being with children which offers real hope for the eventual perfection of the human personality.