



The Montessori OBSERVER

Psychology

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Participants engage in discussion of Montessori principles at the "Creating the New Education" conference in Atlanta, Georgia—October 2-3, 1993

"Creating the New Education" in Atlanta, Georgia ... a process of finding fundamentals

On October 2-3, 1993, the Society conducted its latest "Creating the New Education" conference in Atlanta, Georgia—to study, analyze and resolve the various hidden problems and obstacles involved in the practical work of Montessori teaching. Montessori teachers, school owners, parents and others from states of Georgia, South Carolina, Louisiana, Maryland, Tennessee and Mississippi engaged in this in-depth discussion which focussed

particular attention on the process of finding the underlying "fundamental" patterns for successful application of Montessori principles with children. Since 1986, these Society conferences have been held in various locations to support the continuing education of Montessori teachers and to provide more opportunities for personal participation in the Society's work of creating the "new education".

Led by Lee Havis, Society executive director, the conference discussion directed itself as always to the central reality of the "normalized" child and the basic approach of "control the environment, not the child". However, the October, 1993 conference gave particular attention to recognizing the underlying "fundamental" aspects of successful being with children—to discover those consistent, repeating patterns of thought and action which universally apply beyond the particulars of any one "personality".

Havis indicated that words such as "Observation", "Individual Liberty", and "Preparation of the Environment", provide only limited guidance to effective Montessori teaching. He stated that "with an over-rigid interpretation of Montessori principles, our high-minded words and ideals can actually interfere with our best efforts in creating a true "normalizing" environment for children. As always, we must discover and resolve those unknown inner errors which deter effective self-examination and control of the 'adult personality'".

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 3

Cont'd. on Page 3, Col. 3

Woodlands Training Centre to Participate with IMAC

In November 1993, the Woodlands Training Centre (Sri Lanka) announced its commitment to participate in the formation and operation of the International Montessori Accreditation Council (IMAC). This Montessori "umbrella" accrediting agency also includes the participation of International Montessori Society, Montessori School of Rowland Heights (California), and Peter Hesse-Stiftung (Germany).

Lee Havis, Society executive director, indicated that the Woodlands Centre has been interested and involved in the IMAC development for many years—through correspondence and other association of its Director, Sharmini DeZylva and others associated with this program. He stated that "instructors and graduates of the Woodlands Centre have attended

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 2

Montessori Conference

Creating the New Education
Hammond, Louisiana
April 23-24, 1994

The Society's two-day weekend conference, "Creating the New Education" is for parents, teachers, and others to expand their Montessori teaching skill and ability with children. Led by Lee Havis, the uniquely open discussion format of the conference has evolved from the successful completion of over thirty-five (35) such similar conferences held throughout the United States and elsewhere since 1986.

Location/Accommodations: The conference is located in a hotel with sleeping rooms available for those outside of commuting distance from the Hammond, Louisiana area. Registration fee includes lunch on both days and refreshments in the conference room at all times. Specific information will be sent upon registration.

Registration: \$200 per person (\$160, member) rate by March 23, 1994. A \$30 discount applies to registrations received by February 23, 1994. For every three registrations received from the same school, a fourth person may attend at no extra cost.

Send registration fee to:
International Montessori Society
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New Facilities for Trust Tutoring

Since July 1992, Trust Tutoring has been expanding its in-home tutoring services in the Washington, DC area according to Montessori principles—in close association and communication with the International Montessori Society. Directed by Lee Havis, Society's executive director, Trust Tutoring will soon acquire its own new facilities next door to the Society's offices at 912 Thayer Avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland.

The new facilities will include a modern computer, printer and other basic telecommunications resources to speed up and help organize the growing operation of Trust Tutoring in the Washington, DC area. Inquiries from throughout this metropolitan region will be

Psychology

by Lee Havis

"We must study the environment, we must study the relation of younger and older children . . . this is how this study of the psychology of the child receives a practical application . . . the school becomes a psychological laboratory . . ."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Voice* 10 Dec 41, p. G

Montessori teaching is a very psychological way of being—to study the child as an "unknown entity" to discover and free its true "normalized" nature; i.e. self-disciplined, orderly and in complete harmony with its surrounding environment. The Montessori classroom therefore serves as a type of research laboratory into the child's true nature—where the surrounding influences of the teacher's physical presence, arrangement of physical objects and other children must be most precisely controlled. Directing such a "normalizing" environment is the Montessori teacher who must function as a true psychologist to investigate and analyze the most basic aspects of human behavior.

The Teacher

" . . . The teacher . . . must be more a psychologist than a teacher."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Montessori Method*, p. 173

The essential work of Montessori teaching is to discover and respond to the various inner instincts and interests of children for their own goal-directed activity. As a true psychologist, the Montessori teacher must learn to discern and interpret inner motivation and instincts associated with child behavior—even while she is presenting lessons and assuring the child's physical well-being. Applying the idea of "control the environment, not the child" requires a most delicate discrimination between the "child" as an "unknown entity" and its surrounding 'environment"—a very scientific approach to the individual child in accordance with a whole new type of psychology.

New Psychology

"Modern psychology exactly suits our method, for whereas the older science was based on the observation of superficial facts of conscienceness, the new seeks to observe the unconscious mind, and probe its secrets in order to discover the mind's relation to the facts of life . . ."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *To Educate the Human Potential*, p. 27

When Dr. Montessori first discovered the "normalized" child in 1907, the field of psychology was just emerging in the world as a

study of the unknown "unconscious" aspects of human motivation. Beginning with the work of such pioneers as Dr. Sigmund Freud, a "new psychology" now extends itself into many far-ranging aspects of study into basic human development. These studies are revealing how even the most fundamental problems of humanity can be most feasibly resolved through the correct interpretation of childhood behavior.

Interpret Correctly

" . . . If one can interpret correctly the behavior of the child, the solution to the problem of humanity will have been solved."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Voice* 5 Dec 41, p. J

By comparing the behavior of ordinary children with that of the universal "normalized" child, the adult can more correctly interpret and resolve the various complex obstacles and detrimental influences in the environment around a single individual child. Such a psychological approach to teaching must also necessarily account for the normal unfolding process of fundamental tendencies which are shared by all; i.e. to explore the environment, sustain physical survival and express one's true nature in the world. Unfortunately, adults usually fail to practice this type of probing scientific analysis with children due to a psychological quirk in our essential mental formation.

Psychological quirk

"Because of some of psychological quirk, adults are little concerned with preparing a proper environment for their children."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *The Secret of Childhood*, p. 2

Faced with a child's obstinate misbehavior, disobedience and disorder, even the most well-meaning parents and teachers tend to react with negative emotionally—to repress or abandon the child's true "normalized" nature. A psychological quirk is formed within oneself around various prejudicial beliefs, limiting attitudes and other such hidden inner defects—to result in many forms of negativity and abandonment with children. Adults therefore tend to offer "help" to children as a projection of their own unmet needs from childhood—rather than according to the child's own present moment needs for innate psychic development.

Help

" . . . to help life is not to give it only physical help, but also a psychological help, a help to psychic development. This is what has lately come to life under the name of child psychology."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Voice* 3 Nov 41, p. B

Montessori teaching primarily serves the child's spiritual development—by providing opportunities for independent, self-directed activity. Such a "help to life" calls upon the teacher to recognize well-hidden psychological needs which are often disguised by outer behavior patterns of considerable dependency, fantasy and disorder. This type of psychological help to children requires much more than a pleasant and well-ordered presentation of physical objects.

Physical Objects

" . . . moveable letters . . . the magic does not lie in them, but in the psychology of the child."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Formation of Man*, p. 28

While Montessori materials such as "moveable letters" may be useful and appropriate to "normalized" development, their presentation must be consistently guided by the child's underlying psychic needs for "normalized" development. In presenting such physical objects, the Montessori teacher must therefore constantly look out for the child's profound

Cont'd. on Page 3, Col. 2

Look for the
March Observer
featuring
Positive Attitude

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Lee Havis, Executive Director
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Moment of Peril

Talking to a Child

from *Observer*, September 1993

by Lee Havis

When confronted by a mute and uninterested young child such as Mary (see *Observer*, September, 1993), the teacher must remove the detrimental influence of her own "adult personality" as a first consideration. Since Mary is alone in the room with the teacher at the beginning of the morning, there are no significant "physical objects" or "other children" involved in this scenario. In attempting to control her "adult personality", however, the teacher tends to either "abandon" the situation altogether or to become unduly involved in the child's own fantasy and frustration in missing "mother".

Montessori teaching in this "moment of peril" must control the "adult personality" by a determined and persistent positive communication with the child—even while the teacher may be feeling frustrated and awkward in the process. With negative feelings of frustration and discouragement, the teacher may have great difficulty in finding positive words of interest for Mary in the environment. However, any small detail of physical reality at such times may be a beginning of distraction away from the child's distressing fantasy; e.g., noticing the child's clothing, commenting on some physical object around the child, or calling the child over in a persistent manner to show something of possible interest.

Such "small talk" may initially require much direction and focus by the teacher—however, the child's first small efforts at some positive response to this teacher direction must be given every encouragement and opportunity to grow. Even a "small step" by the child in response to this positive teacher communication can be a seed of constructive activity that will eventually disengage the child from its prior fantasy—and move the child towards more "normalized" behavior in the environment.

Mutual Mischief

Tim and Alex are very close friends—4 year olds who seem to want to do everything together. However their joint activities often result in a mutual mischief of considerable disturbance to each other and the total group. When the teacher approaches to engage in conversation, Tim and Alex seem to become even more intense in their mutual mischief—sometimes to virtually disregard the teacher's communication or presence. The teacher's comments with either Tim or Alex only seem to encourage more mutual fantasy and mischief. *What to do?*

Answer in *Observer* March, 1994

Psychology

Cont'd. on Page 2, Col. 3

psychological connection of deep concentration and intellectual involvement with a specific object or exercise. Even small details of the child's behavior must be carefully observed to discover and interpret their underlying purpose and connection with fundamental instincts and interest.

Observation

"We begin by the observation of psychological facts in small children.

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Voice* 24 Nov 41, p. B

Montessori teachers "observe" children to carefully prepare a supportive "normalizing" environment for their independent, self-directed development—to notice the subtle psychological implications of various forms of external activity. Such a penetrating type of "Observation" must constantly balance the child's "Individual Liberty" with the principle of "Preparation of the Environment". These three fundamental Montessori principles help re-direct and guide the teacher's experimentation with children—to allow each child to magically unfold its own unique plan of creation.

The Magic Machine

"... the child is the magic machine which must be studied itself... that is why it is of such great interest."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Voice* 17 Nov 41, p. N

By an amazing process of instinctive adaptation and spontaneous learning, the child under six is a sort of "magic machine"—building up its own entire personality and essential character. After this magical formative period of early childhood, the child loses its distinctive "absorbent mind"—and learning is then achieved only with a considerable effort and limited success. When parents and teachers fail to effectively control their unconscious prejudicial impositions on young children, the "adult personality" then becomes a serious detrimental influence in the environment—a primary obstacle to the complete revelation of the child's "normalized" expression.

Revelation

"It is impossible to make an observation of something that is still unknown... what is unknown should reveal itself through its own proper energies."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 112

The "normalized" child cannot fully express itself when the "adult personality" continues to negatively impose itself in the environment. Montessori teaching must therefore control this "adult personality" element of the environment by a process of constant self-examination and "inner preparation"—to discover and gradually remove those various hidden inner defects and reactive behavior

Cont'd on Page 4, Col. 1

Creating New Education


Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 1

The conference approached the question of controlling the "adult personality" as a process of finding the most fundamental behavior patterns in being with children to recognize and resolve such problematic "personality" issues as "abandonment" and "negativity". Various specific "misbehavior" scenarios were analyzed and dramatized through role-playing the details among those attending. Havis stated that "this type of 'role playing' helps us become more personally aware of our own underlying fundamental errors and negative behavior patterns that otherwise automatically impose themselves on children. In this way, we can help clarify the basic distinction of the "child" and its "environment"—to recognize such specific errors as holding objects after eye contact attention is obtained with the child, failing to continue a positive dialogue with the child in various "power struggle" scenarios and using "negative" language patterns with children.

After the conference, Teri Bickham, Montessori teacher and school owner from Hammond, Louisiana, initiated planning and scheduling for a "Creating the New Education" conference in her local area for the

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Creating New Education

Cont'd from Page 3, Col. 3

weekend of April 23-24, 1994. Society members may now register for this Hammond, Louisiana conference at the reduced rate of \$130 per person (registrations must be sent in by February 23, 1994). For further information about specific location and registration, contact the Society at 912 Thayer Avenue, Suite 207, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910, Tel. (301) 589-1127.

Psychology

Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 2

patterns which otherwise tend to automatically arise in moments of disorder and confusion. Such "inner preparation" is considerably aided by expanding one's imagination to envision the "normalized" nature of the child—even when its outer expression may appear as quite hostile and negative.

Imagination

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

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Childhood to Adolescence*, p. 34

Montessori teachers can learn to imagine the "normalized" child—even when their immediate sensations of fear and lack of success are presenting a most contrary negative impression. By using imagination in a positive sense, we can see more clearly how our own "personality" defects and deficiencies are limiting the possibility for a child's true normalization. In communication and association with others committed to the same vision of the "normalized" child, we can thereby more effectively prepare ourselves to discover that universal way of being which transcends the particular defects of any one "personality"—the path of Montessori principles in accordance with a true scientific psychology.



Sharmini DeZylva (right) and Needra DeZylva (daughter of Sharmini; left) of Woodlands Training Centre (Sri Lanka).

Woodlands Training Centre

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 3

Society conferences and have otherwise maintained personal contact and association with the Society over the years. This personal contact will help considerable in creating a good working relationship between us as we proceed ahead to formation and operation of the various IMAC accreditation activities."

Havis expressed his hope that each unaffiliated Montessori teacher education program would recommend the appointment of a specific representative to serve on the IMAC Generic Review Committee—to assure their effective functioning in the essential accreditation work of IMAC. He stated that "this committee reviews essential documents of the various unaffiliated Montessori programs accredited with IMAC. So, the participation of at least one key representative of each of these programs on the committee would be most helpful to assure a fair and efficient operation of this aspect of IMAC activity. Scheduling of the first organizational meeting of IMAC should therefore await the formalization of membership on this essential committee."

For further information about IMAC, to join in its process of formation or otherwise, contact: IMS, 912 Thayer Ave. #207, Silver Spring, MD 20910, Tel. (301) 589-1127.

Trust Tutoring

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 1

received in the central office—and referred to various local regional directors to set up personal meetings for evaluation of students and contracting with clients. The computer system will be designed to efficiently match the specific needs of each client's situation to the most qualified tutor—and also to perform a wide range of ordinary office and business functions. In this way, office staff will be able to process a high volume of correspondence and telephone inquiries—and allow for the most thoughtful and efficient response to each tutoring situation.

Trust Tutoring will then expand to include a network of computers—so that several office staff can access the same database for inquiries and correspondence from outside the Washington, DC area. Havis stated that "we are already seeing the need and value of greater speed in communicating with regional directors for our local program. An enlarged computer network will be even more necessary as our expanding operation becomes more complex and far-reaching."

Havis has noticed particularly the labor-intensive nature of in-home tutoring—requiring a considerable precision and uniformity in the various routines and procedures applied to all tutoring situations. He stated that "our uniform standards and structure provides a basic integrity and consistency to our approach to tutoring—and also allows Trust Tutoring to eventually serve a much wider geographical area. The new facilities will simplify considerably the overall complexity of this operation—to help us provide a high quality of individual care and attention to each client, student and tutor involved."

Havis indicated that Trust Tutoring is important to the Society's work because it allows for direct study and analysis of the various psychological phenomena and basic aspects of learning in the adult-child relationship. Results of these experiments will be communicated through the Society's various publications, conferences, teacher education and other support services.