



# The Montessori OBSERVER

Published by the International Montessori Society • 912 Thayer Ave. • Silver Spring, Md. 20910 • Phone (301) 589-1127



Participants discuss practical aspects of applying Montessori principles with children during the proceedings of the Society's "Creating the New Education" conference.

— Columbia, South Carolina (October 8-9, 1994)

## Society Conference in Columbia, South Carolina "Creating the New Education" — October 8-9, 1994

The Society held its latest Montessori conference in Columbia, South Carolina on October 8-9, 1994. As always, the conference offered a dynamic, interactive dialogue to experience the central reality of the "normalized" child. Led by **Lee Havis**, Society executive director, the conference was attended by Montessori school owners, teachers and parents from the states of South Carolina, Virginia, New Hampshire and Illinois.

The local *College of Early Learning* was instrumental in the initial planning and organization of this event — with staff member **Kathy Macedon** serving as its primary coordinator. For many years, the *College* has provided this type of close support and collaboration with the Society's work in the southeastern region of the United States.

At the October conference, discussion often returned to the fundamental distinction between the child and the environment. Havis stated that "unless this delicate distinction is clearly recognized, we cannot objectively analyze and implement the idea of 'control the environment, not the child'." At the conference, we were able to discover some of our critical hidden 'inner errors' with children — to learn how to observe and control our most destructive habits and patterns of detrimental being as 'personality'."

Havis also indicated that "we must look past the superficial differences of 'personality' between each other — to

discover such common obstacles as 'negativity' and 'abandonment'. In this conference, we were able to discover some very useful ways to 'trigger' a disruption to these detrimental patterns of behavior with children — to more consciously follow the path of collaboration with the laws of nature."

After the conference, Havis consulted and observed at the *College of Early Learning* — noting the considerable progress achieved at the school over the years. He stated his particular encouragement at the school's growing enrollment and reputation for educational excellence in the local community.

The *College of Early Learning* is now planning for its next conference in the region for Fall, 1995. All interested persons should contact the Society or the *College* directly to support this undertaking. Efforts for a "Creating the New Education" conference are also underway elsewhere — and all interested persons are encouraged to contact the Society directly to lend support and help in the necessary organization and coordination.

The Society taped portions of the South Carolina conference, and a tape is now being prepared for sale to the public. Scheduling of further Society conferences is based on sufficient interest from the local area. Contact the Society for information about the new conference tape — and to help schedule the next Society conference.

## IMAC Approves Accreditation for IMS and Woodlands Training

On November 1, 1994, the IMAC Advisory Committee met in Silver Spring, Maryland, USA to approve for accreditation the Montessori teacher education programs of the Society and the *Woodlands Training Centre* (Sri Lanka). The Committee will meet again in 1995 and 1996 for further action based on self-studies and other review procedures that will be conducted at that time.

The Committee's recent favorable accreditation decisions were based on preliminary recommendations made by the IMAC Generic Review Committee and the Society's own Review Committee. These committees are now preparing guidelines and procedures for the further implementation of accreditation activities.

**Lee Havis**, IMAC chairman and member of the Generic Review Committee, particularly emphasized the importance of review of the *Woodlands Training*

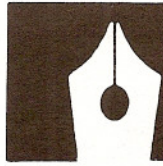
Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 3

## Clifford Thies, New Member of Advisory Board

In August, 1994, Clifford Thies, Ph.D. agreed to serve on the Society's Advisory Board — to help support the Society's accountability and successful operation of its various operations and activities. Dr. Thies presently occupies the Durell Chair of Money, Banking and Finance at the Shenandoah University in Winchester, Virginia. His special field of research interest includes how to change from a government-controlled economy to one of greater freedom for private enterprise.

Dr. Thies received his B.A. degree *cum laude* in Mathematics from St. John's University in New York (1973), and his Ph.D. in Economics from Boston College in Massachusetts (1982). Author of "Macroeconomics for Managers" (1992), Dr. Thies has served on the faculty of the

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 2



# Experience

by Lee Havis

*"The field of child life and child education is one in which all have had experience...These experiences have had a long time to consolidate and to become universal."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Formation of Man*, p.60-61

Only with a most thoughtful self-examination and "inner preparation" can we come to fully experience the reality of the child's true "normalized" being; i.e., self-disciplined, joyful in learning and in complete harmony with its entire environment. Despite our best efforts and knowledge to "control the environment, not the child", early childhood experiences of negativity and abandonment tend to become fixed in our "personality" as patterns of reactive behavior — "unknown errors" that limit our capacity for effective Montessori teaching with children. With our memory, we can uncover some of these formative experiences of the past — and learn to control our "personality" as it is reflected in the outward behavior patterns of children we supervise today.

## Memory

*"...In order to gain something useful from life, we must retain traces of experiences undergone, and here comes memory to our aid."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *To Ed. the Hum Potential*, p.19

As we recall some of the most painful experiences of our early childhood, we can better see how our negative, dependent way of being became formed into our essential "personality" — how our natural sense of spontaneous, self-directed "learning" became distorted by the control and manipulation of various repressive environmental forces. Such insightful memories can significantly help us control our reactive tendencies towards traditional "teaching" with children now. We can also see how our "personality" is reflected by others within a state of credulity — dominated by the prevailing prejudices and unchallenged assumptions of traditional education in society.

## Credulity

*"Credulity is, indeed, a characteristic of immature minds which lack experiences and knowledge of realities."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Spontaneous Act. in Ed.*, p.259

With naive credulity, we ordinarily accept certain generalized assumptions

about the child as weak, dependent and without inner guidance — fundamental ideas about human nature that have been established in society through a long history of traditional education. Montessori teaching requires us to see the child instead as an "unknown entity" — to train our minds to experience what seems impossible from the ordinary perspective of reality. Only with considerable imagination and faith in this "unknown" child can we begin to appreciate the value of its true personality emerging from the infinite and eternal laws of creation.

## Value of the Personality

*"...value of the personality' must have been nurtured by each individual through active efforts and positive experience."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *From Child. to Adolescence*, p.111

However self-evident may be the value of the child's true being, its reality in the world as "personality" is fundamentally dependent on the positive attention and nurturing care it receives from others. When adults judge, neglect, abandon and otherwise limit this inborn experience of being, the child's personality emerges as weak and dependent — a mirror image of the adult's own diminished self-concept in life. In this way, the child's natural instincts for truth and love become distorted and defined by its first formative experiences of social relations with others.

## Social Relations

*"...It is difficult to make social relations real if one uses only the imagination...practical experience is necessary."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *From Child. to Adolescence*, p.27

Beyond physical comfort and nutrition, the infant must positively relate with others to achieve its full measure of normal growth and development. Whether positive or negative, these first social relations become rigidly formed into our whole "personality" — defining our possibility to experience harmony with the surrounding environment. Such harmony emerges more naturally through the young child's direct intelligent contact with physical objects — not through the traditional way of listening to words.

## Listening to Words

*"...education...is not acquired by listening to words, but by virtue of experiences in which the child acts on his environment."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.8

Even though a child of two is normally able to speak and listen, its most fundamental learning occurs primarily through direct sensorial contact with physical objects. Listening to words for the young child can be very confusing because its inexperienced mind is not yet fully prepared to internalize such abstractions as the concept of time, differences between "fantasy" and "reality", and the various social conventions which separate "words" from their associated "action". The young child's "absorbent mind" is more suited instead to learning by self-directed experience with physical objects — spontaneous activity which Dr. Montessori refers to as "work".

## Work

*"...the child can only develop fully by means of experience on his environment. We call such experience 'work'."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 88

Cont'd. on Page 3, Col. 2

Look for the  
**March, 1995 Observer**  
featuring  
**Power**

**The Montessori Observer**  
ISSN 0889-5643  
published by  
INTERNATIONAL MONTESSORI SOCIETY  
912 Thayer Ave., Suite 207  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910  
Tel. (301) 589-1127  
Lee Havis, Executive Director

The *Montessori Observer* is mailed four times each year, in March, May, September and November, to Society members throughout the world. The purpose is to provide news and information about the Society's work in Montessori education, and to extend awareness of Montessori principles throughout the world.

INTERNATIONAL MONTESSORI SOCIETY  
The International Montessori Society is sponsored by Educational Services, Inc., a non-profit corporation organized in Maryland, USA. The Society's purpose is to support the effective application of Montessori principles throughout the world.

IMS ADVISORY BOARD  
Elizabeth Hainstock, Educator, Author  
Dr. R. Orin Cornett, Professor Emeritus  
John Bradshaw, Author, Public Speaker  
Dr. Clifford F. Thies, Economics Professor

SUBSCRIPTION  
Subscription to this *Observer* publication may be obtained by requesting Society membership which is open to all individuals for a \$20 annual fee. Society members also receive a subscription to the *Montessori News* and other membership benefits.

ADVERTISING  
Advertising space is available for services and products relating to Montessori education. Marketplace ads are \$7/line. Position and placement ads are \$20 each and will be set and edited by the Society to conform to space requirements. Write for the Society's advertising outline for details about design advertising rates.

© 1994

## Moment of Peril

by Lee Havis

### Negative Mind-Set

Confronted by the "negative mind-set" of four year old Molly, the teacher cannot see the value of her "positive" responsive efforts (see *Observer*, September, 1994). The child seems to persist even more with her destructive, dangerous "acting out" behavior — throwing objects and otherwise acting against the adult's directions and efforts for a peaceful resolution.

In this "moment of peril", the teacher's "personality" is somehow persisting as a detrimental influence — even though she believes herself entirely "positive" and supportive in all respects. Her "unknown error" is evident in the child's constant reaction to her words and actions. So, the teacher must listen more carefully to her words, to notice any tendency to psychologically "disengage" or "abandon" the child. Such "abandonment" is most often associated with some inner thought of impotence, futility or diminished sense of self-worth.

To work through this "negative mind-set", the teacher must continue to "act" with faith in the "normalized" child — to defy her sense of "futility" and maintain a positive communication with the child at all times. No matter how "positive" it may appear, ANY comment about the child's negative, destructive behavior is likely to touch off more hostile reaction. Therefore, in this situation, the best "positive" action is to distract the child's attention with some totally different idea or interest in the environment.

Even if the child is throwing an object, point out what a beautiful drawing some child has made, or ask a question about what the child likes to do; or how nicely the child is dressed. Eventually, this "distracting" show of affection will lead the child to some positive, constructive action in the environment — and the teacher will notice how the child's "negative mind-set" may suddenly disappear in the emergence of more "normalized" behavior.

### Holding On

2½ year old Gary often takes out materials that are too difficult for him to handle responsibly, and they wind up on the floor as he moves on to other abusive fantasy engagement with materials. When the teacher intervenes to re-direct Gary to return the objects to the shelf, she

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 1

## Experience

Cont'd. from Page 2, Col. 3

The child under six uses its unique "absorbent mind" to profoundly experience all aspects of the physical environment. Guided by a "teacher within", the young child follows its instinctive interests in the constant work of exploring and interacting with surrounding objects. Montessori teaching nurtures this normal "work" experience in children by not only offering a precise sequence of well-ordered materials, but also by giving the time and opportunity for long practice in their exploration and experimentation.

### Long Practice

*"Only exercise and experience can correct a disability, and it takes long practice to acquire the various kinds of skill that are needed."*

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Absorbent Mind*, p.245-46

However clumsy and imperfect may be the child's first efforts to "work" with physical objects, a long period of thoughtful practice will gradually refine and enhance its movements towards a more self-disciplined, stable way of normal being. Montessori teaching provides a substantial time for this vital "normalizing" work to unfold in the child — by observing and encouraging various types of positive experiences with the environment. Following such principles as "preparation of the environment", the adult must offer many motives for concentrated, goal-directed activity.

### Motives

*"The environment must be rich in motives that lend interest to activity and invite the child to conduct his own experiences."*

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Absorbent Mind*, p.92

Montessori teaching initially prepares the environment around each individual child by interrupting its various patterns of disorderly movement and fantasy. Such "preparation" requires the teacher at times to invite the disruptive child to notice what others are constructively doing, to watch some specific ordering activity with objects, or to otherwise positively interact in the environment. By repetition of this type of "interruption", Montessori teachers help the child to proceed on its way to more "normalized" experiences.

### Repetition

*"I know by experience that repetition is a natural way of learning..."*

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Voice*, p.161

The young child repeats various simple "practical life" exercises to intimately

internalize certain basic forms of mental order — and to ultimately experience some profound moment of deep concentration. Once the adult's "interruption" has attracted the child's interest to some goal-directed activity, Montessori teaching must then follow the approach of "non-intervention" — to support and nurture the central "normalization" experience of profound concentration. Lacking our own "normalizing" experiences from childhood, we adults can only develop and refine these delicate and precise skills of "interruption" and "non-intervention" through a constant and thoughtful endeavor to uncover our most hidden "unknown errors" within.

### Thoughtful Endeavor

*"The origins of the educational system in use in the 'Children's Houses'...spring from preceding pedagogical experiences with abnormal children and...represents a long and thoughtful endeavor."*

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Montessori Method*, p.31

Dr. Montessori's discovery of the "normalized" child in 1907 was only a single defining moment within a much more vast and far-reaching study of the human experience. Despite the thoughtful endeavor and devotion of so many diverse personalities and organizations to her work over the years, its reality as the "normalized" child remains a most mysterious individual process of "inner preparation" and self-discovery. Beyond even our most elevated understanding of "Montessori", we must each discover this profound reality for ourselves — following the gradual guidance of our own personal and practical experiences.

### Gradual Guidance

*"A program should only be drawn up gradually under the guidance of experience."*

Dr. Maria Montessori

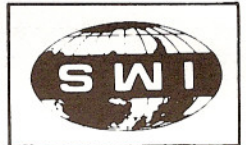
from *From Child. to Adolescence*, p.27

Since understanding of "Montessori" comes only imperfectly through our limited knowledge and perceptions, we must constantly question and analyze our everyday experiences with children. In applying the idea of "control the environment, not the child", we must adjust our minds to experience the "child" as an "unknown entity" — rather than as its outer appearance of a physical body and superficial personality. Beyond the perceptions and judgment of "normalized" behavior that we can see, the child will ultimately reveal itself only through our being committed to vital fundamental laws of nature.

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 1

Address correction requested

912 Thayer Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20910



**OBSERVER**  
*The Montessori*

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 3875  
Silver Spring, MD

## Moment of Peril

Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 1

finds herself "holding on" to objects in a power struggle with Gary. The teacher continues this effort to control the objects by "holding on" to them while speaking with firm authority about their proper use — but Gary continues to hold on and pull back with even greater force. The teacher feels no resolution from her efforts to "control the environment, not the child".  
What to do?

Answer in March, 1995, *Observer*.

## Experience

Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 3

### Vital Laws

"...experiences are guided or led by deep sensibilities, they are ruled by vital laws."

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *Voice*, p.174

Since even our deepest sensibilities and instincts are subject to interpretations and expectations in our "personality", Montessori teaching must look to the guidance of vital laws of nature which are only approximated by such terms as (1) "Observation"; (2) "Individual Liberty" and (3) "Preparation of the Environment". Guided by these three Montessori principles in thoughtful communication with others, we can nonetheless learn to correct many of our most deeply hidden "unknown errors" within — and alter our behavior in very positive ways with children. However, only well beyond all our words, concepts, feelings and understanding of "Montessori" will we ultimately experience the complete reality of the child's true "normalized" being.

\* *Voice* refers to —

"The Voice of Maria Montessori"

(J. Hardinge, Publ.)



Dr. Clifford Thies, new Advisory Board member of Society

## Clifford Thies

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 3

University of Baltimore and other institutions of higher education since 1979. In 1992, he was Bradley Resident Scholar with the Heritage Foundation in Washington, DC. His community service include vice-chairman of the Republican Liberty Caucus and recent past member of the Libertarian National Committee.

Lee Havis, Society executive director, expressed his appreciation for the participation of Dr. Thies on the Advisory Board. He stated that "I first became acquainted with Dr. Thies when his wife was running for Governor of the State of Maryland — and later in our mutual involvement with support for educational freedom. His strong interest and involvement with financial matters and educational freedom will contribute significantly to the Society's work for the 'new education' — and our mutual concern for greater freedom of choice in the marketplace of ideas in the world."

## IMAC Accreditation

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 3

Centre. He stated that "although the Generic Review Committee Already has established its specific standards and criteria, we have yet to implement them in the full process of self-study and on-site evaluation. The way we apply our procedures and standards with the Woodlands Training Centre now will therefore establish likely precedents with far-reaching implications for all further reviews of 'non-affiliated' programs."

The IMAC Advisory Committee specifically indicated its desire for as much specific guidance to new "non-affiliated" programs as possible — to simplify the procedural aspects of compliance with IMAC standards. Havis indicated his intention to consult closely with the Committee on the design and operation of the various new procedures and forms.

The Advisory Committee was also informed of progress in the IMAC effort for its recognition with the US Department of Education — and continuing opposition to government recognition of non-inclusive accreditation in the field. Havis stated that he has already received many petitions against the recognition of MACTE. However, he also indicated the need to positively support the inclusive IMAC approach for Montessori accreditation.

For further information about IMAC accreditation and application procedures, contact: Lee Havis, IMAC chairman, 912 Thayer Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20910 USA.