



The Montessori

Power

OBSERVER

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Society Conferences now Available on Audio Tape

The Society now has available a special 90 minute tape of excerpts from its "Creating the New Education" conferences held in Hammond, LA and Columbia, SC in 1994. Lee Havis, who led these two-day weekend events, indicated that the tape has distilled out some of the most valuable insights and broadly applicable observations — to help listeners gain a sense of how the conferences help in the essential "inner preparation" for Montessori teaching.

Havis stated that "I believe this tape will be very useful to convey some of the skills involved in Montessori teaching to "control the environment, not the child". I have added also a brief introduction on the tape to help clarify the Society's distinctive communication of being as a "commitment to Montessori principles".

Havis indicated that the tape should reinforce basic knowledge of experienced Montessori practitioners, and also provide a useful introduction for others. He stated that "our only prior conference recording was back in 1986 — and the audio quality was then rather poor. Now after 40

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Children working at the Montessori House of Children in the US Virgin Islands

IMAC Opposes MACTE "Recognition" Petition

In February, 1995, Lee Havis informed all IMAC members of the pending petition of the MACTE accrediting agency for recognition by the US Department of Education. He stated that "the MACTE petition is now scheduled to be heard by the Advisory Committee of the US Department of Education at their next meeting on May 24-26, 1995. Since written comments are due by March 27, 1995, I am urging all interested parties to respond promptly to this matter. While we are grateful that so many have expressed their opposition to the MACTE petition, IMAC and the Society will continue their efforts with written comments and oral testimony in due course."

Havis also noted that the IMAC generic review committee met recently to approve its formal "self-study" report format for applicable programs. In February, 1995, the Woodlands Training Centre (Sri Lanka) was sent a copy of this format with instructions to proceed with its "self-study" procedure — the first step in achieving its full IMAC accreditation status. The Woodlands program presently holds a provisional accreditation with IMAC which is set to expire in 1996. The Society's own review committee is also meeting to discuss similar proce-

dures for teacher education conducted under their jurisdiction.

For further information about Montessori accreditation and government "recognition", contact the Society at 912 Thayer Ave., #207, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Tel. (301) 589-1127.

Montessori House of Children in the Virgin Islands

In June, 1994, Gerald and Dynese Abraham purchased and remodeled the Montessori House of Children in Frederiksted, St. Croix, US Virginia Islands. It was then re-opened in September, 1994, and now enrolls 22 children aged 2-12.

Ms. Abraham states that the school's ultimate goal is to expand their enrollment to a full capacity of 60 children, and to enlarge their program with additional staff and a summer program. The school also plans to include Spanish language instruction.

The House of Children provides a full-day program which includes art, music and parent education. For further information, contact: Dynese Abraham, Montessori House of Children, PO Box 805, Frederiksted, St. Croix, USVI 00841, Tel. (809) 772-1187.

Conference Tape

Excerpts of
"Creating the New Education"
conferences held in Hammond, LA and
Columbia, SC, 1994

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Power

by Lee Havis

"Faced with this vision of great power in the child...we must observe that power minutely, and see in what way we can help it...we must do something to create a practical science to use those powers which our intuition has lately come to recognize."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Ed. for a New World*, p.12

When Dr. Montessori discovered the child's true nature in 1907, she also realized its great power to affect the whole fabric of human civilization. Around her central vision of a new "normalized" child, Dr. Montessori built up a new practical science to study the development and formation of the human personality. Montessori teaching today continues this "new education" in many diverse situations — to discover and free the child's great power of love and positive constructive energy in the world.

Child's Power

"...the child has a great power within himself, a power from which the adult humanity has to take a good deal in order to be able to understand itself."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Voice*, p.235

From the moment of conception, the child begins to express itself in the environment — a powerful force of nature which gradually becomes evident in the person of a young child being in the environment. Applying the approach of "control the environment, not the child", Montessori teachers support a "normalization" of the ordinary child — a transforming experience of deep concentration and goal-directed activity. This indirect "normalizing" support in the environment enables the child to unfold its own unique work of creation.

Work of Creation

"With his subconscious mind does the child achieve his wonderful work of creation, through a power of such marvelous sensitivity as resembles to some extent a photographic plate..."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Ed. for a New World*, p.16

During infancy and early childhood, nature guides the child to form itself in harmony with its own particular place, time and group. Without conscious effort, the young child follows this inner plan of creation to absorb and integrate within itself a great mass of precise, detailed knowledge about the surrounding physical and cultural reality. After six, this powerful

"absorbent mind" is lost as the child acquires a life-long stability of being defined by its "personality".

Absorbent Mind

"The powers of the absorbent mind are gradually dulled as the conscious mind becomes organized."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Discovery of the Child*, p.325

Because of the special "absorbent" quality of the young child's mind, Montessori education emphasizes the formative period of early childhood. Since the older child can no longer "absorb" knowledge spontaneously as before, learning can then only be accomplished through conscious will and considerable mental effort. When we follow such fundamental principles as (1) "Observation"; (2) "Individual Liberty" and (3) "Preparation of the Environment", we can begin to see the young child expressing its wonderful "normalized" powers with others.

Expressing Power

"The power of the child is so great that even when imprisoned as society does to him he still manages to use his power. Nevertheless, society by putting barriers does limit the expression of functioning of many of his great powers."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Voice*, p.252

Even the most well-meaning adult can disturb the child's "normal" development by acting with impatience, negativity, and abandonment. Montessori teaching therefore works to control these detrimental influences of the "adult personality" — by finding and correcting the hidden "inner errors" which are at cause in all scenes of "misbehavior". By such an "inner preparation", we are controlling our "adult personality" so that the child's own irresistible inner strength can fully emerge.

Irresistible Inner Strength

"The children would not obey the adult because they had a higher inner law which commanded them and therefore the adult was powerless in front of this irresistible inner strength."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Voice*, p.252

The child's inherent inner strength of normal being is considerably opposed by such traditional education methods as adult-controlled curriculum, rules, rewards and punishments. Whatever short-term "obedience" and "order" may be gained from these efforts to control the child, the long-term negative results remain in the

child's personality as a life-time of "acting out" such patterns as diminished self-image, impotence, submissiveness, timidity, rebellion, forgetting, etc. Dominated by the reality of our limited personality, the ordinary adult-child relationship tends to express a constant power struggle — a fundamental clash of wills that can erupt at times with considerable intensity and disturbing emotionality.

Power Struggle

"An adult, however high or low he may be, is always a powerful being in comparison with a child...carried away by his dreams, a child begins to exploit him...there comes at least a clash and violent struggle."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.166

When we experience failure in Montessori teaching, children seem to defy our most thoughtful and compassionate actions on their behalf. In such

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Look for the
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ADAPTATION

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Lee Havis, Executive Director

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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.

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Moment of Peril

by Lee Havis

~ Holding on ~

2½ year old Gary is definitely in a "power struggle" with the teacher over the control of some object (see *Observer*, November, 1994). Although the teacher is obviously trying to "control" the "physical objects" in the environment, she finds herself "holding on" without achieving the desired result of more "normalized" behavior in the child.

Although the teacher must certainly control the "physical objects" when they are a detrimental influence, this "control" must not extend to the point where the "child" is being controlled as well — and this is what is happened here in this "moment of peril". Once the teacher obtains the child's attention by "controlling" some object in a physical way, she must then let go. Her further efforts to control the environment must then be directed to her own "personality".

The teacher's persistent "holding on" to the object communicates a basic distrust of the child's true nature, and is therefore inconsistent with viewing the child as an "unknown entity". In such "power struggles", what appears as the "child" amounts to the externalized drama of one's own "personality". The "child" then plays out the teacher's own frustrated self-expression, abandonment and lack of trust from her own long forgotten childhood.

Once the teacher has gained the child's eye contact and attention, she should let go of the object, and proceed with specific instructions about how to handle the object; or, to simply direct attention to some other aspect of interest in the environment. As the "power struggle" with objects is defused, the child will then return to a more calm and orderly being in the environment.

The Other Child

It seems that five year old Martha can go nowhere or do nothing without the constant negative interference of three year old Patsy. Martha therefore insists that the teacher accompany her to the bathroom and for other activities — to keep Patsy from interrupting. The teacher wants to control the "other child", but she cannot decide which is the "hub" child — and meanwhile Martha seems to express a very rational argument and need for help. *What to do?*

Answer in *Observer*, May, 1995

Power

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"moments of peril", we may feel quite alone and confused in our efforts to "control the environment, not the child" — struggling against unknown inner forces of negativity and abandonment. We must then exercise such means as the power of silence to separate our "being" from "personality".

Power of Silence

"...a new type of teacher has been evolved; instead of facility in speech, she has to acquire the power of silence..."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Spontaneous Act. in Ed.*, p.128

Committed to the principle of "observation", Montessori teachers must carefully listen and learn from their being with children. With an alert silence, we may detect some hidden pattern of reactive words and actions with children — detrimental tendencies which we must then work to control. By such "observation", we are exercising our own power to create a "normalizing" environment for children.

Power to Create

"...thought begins to construct works by means of which the external world becomes transformed; almost as if the thought of man had assumed a marvelous power: the power to create."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Spontaneous Act. in Ed.*, p.241

Thinking about "Observation", "Individual Liberty" and "Preparation of the Environment" can help us approach the child as an "unknown entity" — to allow us to truly discover the child. At such times, we separate our being as "commitment to Montessori principles" from "personality" — to objectively view the external drama in others as a reflection of our own inner drama of self-expression from childhood. As we then act to "control the environment, not the child", we will gradually overcome our ordinary sense of impotence in the face of overwhelming impossibility.

Impotence

"The real enemy is man's impotence against his own products...To vanquish this enemy, man has only to react and behave in a different manner towards the environment."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Formation of Man*, p.18

In the presence of the unknown, we may feel quite "impotent" as we seek out some uncertain solution with children. Alone and desperate for an immediate answer, we usually wish only to avoid the discomfort of the present moment. We must then renounce our conventional un-

derstanding and knowledge of the child — to consider different perceptions and possibilities for being.

Renunciation

"The teacher then makes his great renunciation of power and authority, to find himself immensely the gainer by the loss."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *To Ed. the Hum. Pot.*, p.123

Montessori teachers give up the traditional role of power and authority over children — to assert instead an indirect role of supportive being in the child's environment. With our attention directed to "preparation of the environment", we must see any misbehavior as a call to notice and analyze the three elements around the child; i.e., "physical objects", "other children" and the "adult personality". As we seek out and control the detrimental influences in these elements, we can begin to experience the power of being in harmony with infinite laws of nature — to adapt ourselves to the reality of the "normalized" child.

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Trust Tutoring Test for Evaluation of Basic Skills

Lee Havis, director of *International Montessori Trust*, recently announced his development of a new test to evaluate basic skills in children aged 3-18. Havis indicated the test would serve to initially evaluate students in *Trust Tutoring* — the in-home instructional program organized by Havis in 1992.

Havis emphasized how simple and easy the test is to administer — providing useful diagnostic information and approximate age-level comparisons in about ½ hour. He stated that "The subjects of reading, writing and math are covered in a series of carefully sequenced questions and problems. Our focus is concept understanding, so the reading and writing parts are based on phonetic rules and frequency of English speech sounds. For math, the test proceeds from the most basic concepts of counting all the way to beginning calculus."

Positions & Placements

Teacher/Intern: needed for Montessori teaching in age group 3-6. Some experience required. Call or write: Donna Fronte, Vicarage School of Montessori, 48 London Dr., Hamden, CT 06517, Tel. (203) 288-2116.

Address correction requested

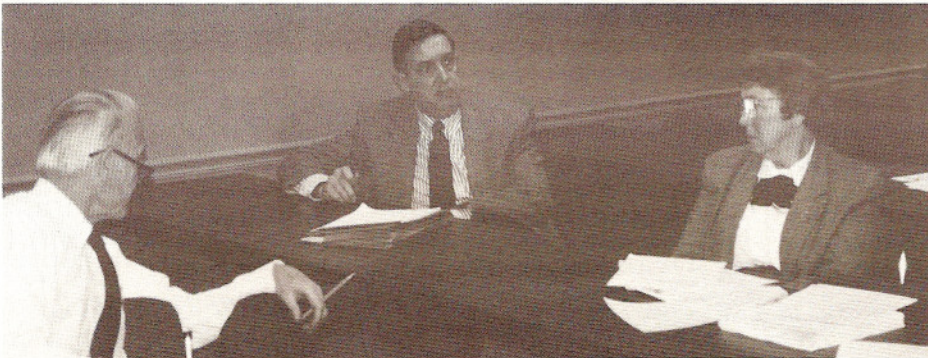
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Discussion during ACE coalition meeting in Washington, DC, January 31, 1995
(left to right) Curran Tiffany (Nat'l. Assoc. of Evangelicals); William Tobin (Child Care America) and Sr. Renee Oliver (Citizens for Educational Freedom)

ACE Coalition Intensifies Action for Educational Choice

On Jan. 31, 1995, Lee Havis convened a meeting of "Americans for Choice in Education" (ACE) to discuss election of officers, new organizational structure and various proposals to move forward implementation of "educational choice" in the United States. The meeting was called to support the new, more favorable direction of the US congress since the November, 1994 elections. New elected officers will serve as an ACE "executive committee" to coordinate and direct consensus decision-making of the 29 member organizations on a broad range of proposals for "choice" throughout the United States.

Havis specifically proposed that the ACE coalition begin with "choice" legislation at the national level — to create a fair "funding" formula for distribution of social welfare spending and to "voucherize" this spending so that individual recipients would bear more responsibility and "choice" for use such as with non-government educational programs. In February, Havis also attended a special meeting to discuss how to bring greater "choice" into the operation of the public school system of the District of Columbia.

The ACE coalition also continues its commitment to repeal the "recognition" regulations of the federal government over private accrediting agencies. Havis stated that "repeal of these unnecessary and burdensome regulations would help stimulate greater diversity and choice in the free market of higher education. The current regulations threaten 'recognition' of an exclusionary Montessori accrediting agency which seeks to stifle competition in the field from among the most independent, creative forms of Montessori teacher education."

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Adaptation

"The great part of man is that he adapts to every part of the environment and that he modifies it...while developing himself he unconsciously develops his own adaptation to his environment."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Meaning of Adaptation*, p.5

Through trial and error, Montessori teachers adapt their being with children by constant reference to fundamental laws of nature. Over time, we can begin to see how adjusting our own inner thoughts in this way has a most striking, positive impact on our external circumstances. While this Montessori teaching with individual children may enrich and reward us in many ways, our real power in being committed to Montessori principles lies well beyond our personal relations and circumstances — ultimately expressing itself in the great work of creating Dr. Montessori's "new education" in the world.

*Voice refers to "The Voice of Maria Montessori (J. Hardinge, Publ.)

Conference Tape

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 1

conferences, we have considerably refined our communication, and the audio quality is much improved. I think the tapes would be ideal for distribution to parents and staff of schools — to later allow for a most stimulating and worthwhile group discussion on Montessori teaching."

Havis expressed his hope that the tape would encourage more interest in further conferences. He stated that "we have various persons coordinating local efforts for these conferences in the United States in such areas as Virginia, South Carolina, Oregon and Texas and in Sri Lanka. Interested persons should respond to the letters being sent out by these local coordinators — or contact the Society directly for more information."

Conference tapes are \$14.95 ea. (plus \$1.50 for shipping and handling); more than five tapes, no postage/handling in U.S.; 10+ tapes, price is \$12.95 (no postage in U.S.) To order, send payment to: IMS, 912 Thayer Ave., #207, Silver Spring, MD 20910.