



The Montessori

OBSERVER

Adaptation

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Children working at the Baran "Infant/Preschool Program" in Beaverton, Oregon

IMAC Testifies for Inclusive Montessori Accreditation

On May 24, 1995, IMAC will present testimony before the *National Advisory Committee* of the US Department of Education — in opposition to the recognition of the exclusionary MACTE agency in the field of Montessori teacher education. **Lee Havis**, IMAC Board chairman and **Dr. Jerry Duvall**, member IMAC Advisory Committee are scheduled to testify for the IMAC position of inclusive Montessori accreditation. Havis will particularly emphasize his concern for the detrimental influence that such government recognition of exclusionary accreditation could have on the continuing growth and development of Montessori education in the United States and elsewhere.

Havis will also underline the broad, inclusive approach to Montessori accreditation afforded by the *International Montessori Accreditation Council* (IMAC). Havis stated that IMAC testimony will raise the following key points which have already been submitted in detailed written commentary before to the US Department of Education:

1. MACTE lacks substantial purpose for recognition since other recognized agencies already exist to serve the indicated need;
2. MACTE is not a reliable authority for quality in the field because it unfairly excludes certain categories of effective teacher education;

3. MACTE lacks proper protection against conflict of interest;
4. MACTE lacks clear standards to determine quality;
5. MACTE recognition would unfairly prejudice IMAC accreditation;

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Montessori in Beaverton, Oregon

In August, 1993, **Patricia Baran** established the "infant/preschool care" program in her split-level home in Beaverton, Oregon. She indicates that the lower level of the house has been converted into an ideal "prepared" environment, with climbing equipment and organized materials on low shelves that are particularly suitable for the very young children she serves.

Since June, 1993, Ms. Baran has been enrolled in the Society's teacher education course through correspondence — and this support has helped her to incorporate Montessori principles into the operation of her program which is now recognized by the Society as a Montessori school.

As facilitator for her local branch of a state-wide group known as the "Provider Resource Organization", she has been helping local family day care providers to take on a more professional, educational

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Reform of Public Education in District of Columbia

Since February, 1995, **Lee Havis**, Society executive director and others have been active in the Washington, DC area to develop a program to reform and restructure the operation of public education in the District of Columbia. The newly elected US congress has taken a particular interest in this matter in view of its special relationship and responsibility for the governance of this jurisdiction of the nation's capital.

As a member of the DC "Education First" coalition, Havis has been meeting with others to discuss how greater parental choice and individual responsibility might be incorporated into public education — to improve its overall quality and performance. Since congress has now

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Montessori Conference

Creating the New Education
Columbia, South Carolina
October 14-15, 1994

The Society's two-day weekend conference, "Creating the New Education" provides a psychological "inner preparation" to enhance and improve Montessori teaching skills to "control the environment, not the child". The discussion format allows for in-depth examination of the most fundamental aspects of "being" — to discover and resolve "unknown errors" with children. Centered on the reality of the "normalized" child, the conference will be led by **Lee Havis** — according to a structure and format that has been successfully employed in over forty similar conferences since its first introduction in 1986.

Registration: \$200 per person (\$160, member rate) by September 14, 1994. A \$50 late fee applies to registrations after deadline. By August 14, 1995, a \$30 per person discount applies. Send registration fee to:

International Montessori Society
912 Thayer Ave.
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Tel. (301) 589-1127

Adaptation

by Lee Havis

"The great power 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

Montessori teaching aims to create a special adaptation to the child's true nature — to free the "normalized" child to express its spontaneous self-discipline, love of order and profound interest in goal-directed intelligent activity. However ill-suited such a vision of perfection may seem to our present-day culture, true Montessori teaching is a calling to follow this apparently impossible mission. Since heredity endows no one at birth with the necessary skills for this approach to the child, we must each adapt ourselves to this vital work through practice and experience.

Heredity

"Man is capable of anything...Each man must prepare for himself an adaptation which is not given by heredity. He must prepare his own adaptation. This is the great difference between man and animal."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Meaning of Adaptation*, p.3

Heredity and personality cannot entirely predict or determine the course of our preparation for Montessori teaching — so we must create a new way of being committed to such fundamental principles as (1) "Observation"; (2) "Individual Liberty" and (3) "Preparation of the Environment". This "commitment to Montessori principles" charts out an approach to the child as an "unknown entity" which at first seems impossible to our adult way of thinking. However, mankind does adapt to discovery of the "unknown" — an aspect our fundamental instinct to explore which is our common destiny throughout the history of civilization.

History of Civilization

"Man has to adapt himself to all kinds of conditions in the environment and never fixes himself in his habits because he evolves continuously along the course of history of civilization."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Formation of Man*, p.89

While we must certainly all adapt to our surrounding culture, we must also adapt to our fundamental needs to explore the environment and express our being. Whether realized or not, Montessori teachers of young children serve

these inborn instincts of the human spirit — by acting on and influencing human life during its most sensitive developmental period. Before the age of about six, the child must adapt to many forms of external adult influence — creating within itself a "personality" which accurately reflects the reality of its present time, place and group.

Personality

"By absorbing what he finds about him, he forms his own personality."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.84

During early childhood, the young child "absorbs" the environment with an amazing precision and exactness — constructing its unique "personality" as an intimate adaptation to all its surrounding environment. By about the age of six, the formed "personality" finally emerges with considerable stability — to identify the child's distinctive way of being for life. Such a remarkable integration of personality occurs spontaneously in the young child's mind through its everyday efforts and experiences for normal self-expression in the environment.

Integration of Personality

"A child is forced to come to terms with his surroundings and the efforts entailed lead to an integration of his personality."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.35

Since the young child can only integrate its personality from what is available in the environment, Montessori teaching must assure that a positive, nurturing opportunity for normal self-development is provided in all respects. When adults thoughtlessly neglect or negativity interfere with the child's spontaneous interests for self-directed learning, the child must adapt itself to conform to this warped and defective condition. Within such detrimental circumstances, substantial limits are placed on the child's potential for full "normalized" expression.

Limits

"A child enclosed within limits however vast remains incapable of realizing his full value and will not succeed in adapting himself to the outer world."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *From Child. to Adol.* p.26

Adult "personality" impositions arise in many forms of negative criticism, rewards and punishments — the ordinary pattern of traditional education. This type of adult-centered teaching tends to limit and weaken the child's ability to think and act for itself — creating a very dependent

type of personality. Since we all have our own unknown flaws and "inner errors", we must constantly examine ourselves to correct and control these errors which can so seriously disturb the child's true normal development.

Normal

"Only those who are adapted to their environment can be said to be really normal. Adaptation is the starting point, the ground we stand on."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Meaning of Adaptation*, p.1

Montessori teachers create a "normalizing" environment for children by carefully removing the various detrimental influences found around a single "hub" child in question. Within such a "normalizing" condition, the child is then free to return to its state of normal being in complete harmony with others. This Montessori approach to "control the environment, not the child" creates a cosmic unity to fundamentally adapt to the reality of the "normalized" child.

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May, 1995 Observer
featuring
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Lee Havis, Executive Director

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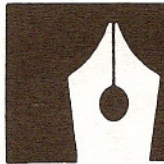
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Moment of Peril

by Lee Havis

The Other Child

One child can become a serious obstacle in the environment of another, when that "other child" seeks to constantly disrupt, disturb and interfere with the "hub" child's self-directed, independent activity (see *Observer*, March, 1995). Since five year old Martha appears to be the "hub" child in this scenario, Patsy would seem to be the "other child" to be controlled by the adult's Montessori teaching to "control the environment, not the child".

The teacher here cannot decide which is the "hub" child and which is the "other child" since both children seem to adversely affect each other. Since all dependency and detrimental attachment in a relationship is always somewhat "mutual", the "hub" child in these situations may really fluctuate between one or the other. The teacher's lack of adjustment to this changing perspective of being in this moment of peril is creating a confusion that interferes with her ability to properly "control the environment, not the child".

To discern the "other child" to properly control in any given "moment of peril", the rule of thumb is to designate this as the one most easily drawn away from the scene of misbehavior. If Patsy's attachment towards Martha is primarily a matter of boredom or lack of stimulation elsewhere in the environment, then the teacher may quite readily approach Patsy to "distract" her attention away from Martha towards some positive activity elsewhere in the environment — perhaps to simply talk about other things in the environment that are more suitable to her level of interest and development. If Patsy is drawn away successfully, then we can see that she was indeed the "other child", and the matter is resolved for Martha to continue uninterrupted in her own separate activity.

However, if the teacher's efforts to attract Patsy elsewhere in the environment are frustrated by Martha's continual argument, complaining and other negative attention in the situation, the teacher may well view Patsy as the "hub" child, and seek to control Martha as the "other child". In this case, the teacher would proceed as before to positively interact with Martha to direct her attention more deeply into her present-moment activity or otherwise direct her towards some positive interest

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Adaptation

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Cosmic Unity

"...functions are also tied up with one another and complete this design in one big cosmic unity which makes the work of each species necessary for the upkeep of the world."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Voice*, p.238

Beyond our immediate awareness of interests and needs in life, we all serve the entire cosmic unity of all. While we may consciously struggle only to achieve our various short-term goals to avoid pain and create pleasure, we are nonetheless playing out a far greater role in service to the vast evolving cosmos. Even in circumstances of great personal depression, doubt, confusion and fear, we can still consciously act in small ways to serve this greater cosmic purpose — to adapt the environment in some positive, effective manner for the emergence of the "normalized" child.

Environment

"The environment itself...is in reality an active and vital response to the new patterns manifested in the life of a growing child."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.140

While the young child is adapting itself to the environment, the child's environment is likewise adapting to the child. Montessori teachers have the special function to assure that this adaptation is consistent with the child's true normal development. No such adaptation is ever just a one-sided process, but rather a give-and-take interaction of all — a correlation of each one's actions with those of others.

Correlation

"...while developing himself he unconsciously develops his own adaptation to his environment. To understand the child's tendencies...we must see man in correlation with his environment and how his adaptation is to be created."

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

Montessori teachers must correlate their lesson presentations with children to find some object of interest for each individual child. This correlation of objects with the young child leads to its eventual moment of "normalization" — an event in time which is accompanied with profound concentration on some object of interest. Despite the considerable limitations of our "personality", we can still create a separate being committed to Montessori principles — acting with a habit and work which is instantly centered on the reality of the "normalized" child.

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Reform Public Education

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established a special "Financial Control Board" to assume greater accountability over the local DC government, the need to control excessive government spending in public education is also a vital aspect of its oversight responsibility.

On May 12, 1995, a congressional panel heard testimony about the DC public schools from several local government officials and parents. The testifying parents generally agreed that strong measures were needed to create a substantial reform of the current system.

Havis has prepared a proposal entitled "Reform of DC Public Schools" — a detailed, specific plan of action to encourage competition and parental choice in the operation of DC public education. Specific documents are included to implement a "voucher" for government funding of parental choice. In addition, the Havis proposal would de-centralize the current public school system by allowing each ward to establish its own "education committee" to plan out its own operation of public education in their particular area of the city. Havis emphasized especially the benefit and value of decision-making from the most local residents — to assure the deep structural changes that are necessary to create real choice and competition.

Havis stated that each education committee would submit their funding and budget plans for public education to the DC Board of Education for its review and approval. The *Financial Control Board* would serve as the final decision-making body for appeals and oversight. The *Financial Control Board* would serve as the "state education agency" for DC to control and approve all federal compensatory education funding. The *Board* would appoint an "education executive" to direct and implement its various educational

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IMAC Testifies

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6. The IMAC agency represents a more reliable authority of quality in the field.

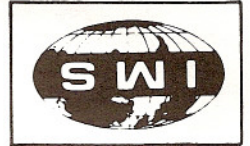
In May, 1995, IMAC submitted its own petition for recognition as an accrediting agency by the US Department of Education. Havis stated that "we believe that if any Montessori accrediting agency is to be recognized by the US government, the IMAC structure, format and inclusive nature are much more certain to provide a reliable authority of quality in Montessori teacher education."

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Moment of Peril

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elsewhere. Then, Patsy can become a supportive observer, and perhaps eventually become Martha's friendly companion to work with and develop greater interest with the object at hand.

If the teacher will follow the general rule of thumb to identify the "other child" as the one least committed to the misbehavior activity, her actions can then be properly directed to remove the detrimental influence of this "other child". In this way, the teacher is helping both children to return to their normal state of being in harmony with the environment.

Group Disorder

In her efforts to allow "individual liberty" for the children in her classroom, the teacher realizes some mistake in view of the considerable group disorder that seems to arise. When she frees them to interact individually with the materials, the children seem to evolve into many forms of negative behavior, disrespect of materials, and a general condition of disorder in the group. Her individual efforts to "control the environment, not the child" seem inadequate as the group disorder becomes even more dominant and destructive among the children.

What to do?

Answer in *Observer*, September, 1995

1994 Conferences on Audio Tape

\$16.45 each (members, \$14.95)

90 minutes of highlights of the Society's conferences in Hammond, Louisiana and Columbia, South Carolina.

Send payment to IMS

Reform of Public Education

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decisions and policies. A federal program "voucher" would be given directly to each individual recipient of the services to spend for services which may be purchased from a variety of local government or non-government resources. Each recipient would be able to choose those services that best meet their particular remedial needs, with oversight provided by the Financial Control Board.

Havis indicated that the new approach of parental choice in public education requires a new definition of the word "public" to include non-government schooling which serves the general public in a non-discriminatory manner. "I believe that this new definition will encourage a more positive thinking about parental choice and personal responsibility that is necessary for the broad acceptance of this approach in society. Of course, competition not government censorship and control is the best means to assure real quality and excellence in education — and the 'voucher' concept will help develop the free marketplace which is so vitally necessary for this step forward in the field."

Havis is also conducting research and study on how parent-choice vouchers may be implemented in other jurisdictions in the United States. He noted that "if we are successful in creating a new efficient structure for parental choice for DC public education, this might certainly become the established model for application on a wide scale throughout the entire United States."

For more information, to receive a copy of the Havis proposal for "Reform of DC Public Schools", submit your request in writing to the Society.

Montessori in Oregon

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 2

approach to their in-home work with young children. She indicates that her group meets once a month to encourage the exchange of views and information on the care and education of young children.

In 1994, Ms. Baran sent out a letter to schools and individuals on the west coast of the United States announcing her goal of hosting a Society "Creating the New Education" conference in the Portland, Oregon area. To help make her goal a reality or for more information, contact: Patricia M. Baran, 11355 SW Cardinal Terr., Beaverton, OR 97008. Tel. (503) 643-5323.

Adaptation

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Habit and Work

"Man...has an almost unlimited power of adaptation as regards...his capacity to assume innumerable forms of habit and work."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Formation of Man*, p. 75

Through the habit and work of constant "inner preparation", Montessori teachers must constantly renew and reinforce their vision and focus on the "normalized" child. This "inner preparation" is vital to correct those unknown inner errors which result in so many thoughtless detrimental expressions of our own "personality"; e.g., negative speech, impatient actions and neglectful inattention. As we practice this more positive, detached way of being committed to Montessori principles with children, our actions will gradually reflect our true adaptation to the emergence of the "normalized" child in the world.

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