



The Montessori

OBSERVER

Inner Preparation

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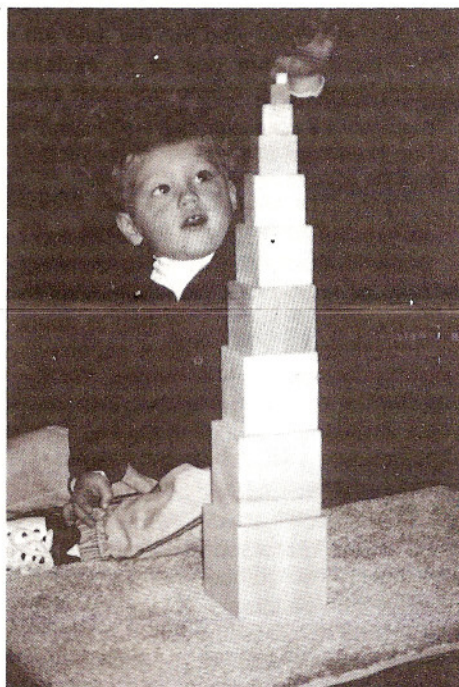
Rooster Loft Montessori in Waukesha, Wisconsin

The Rooster Loft Montessori in Waukesha, Wisconsin is owned by **Sally Rouse** and operated by her for children from birth to age 5. The program is conducted on a year round, full-day basis and holds IMS recognition as a Montessori school. It is also nationally accredited by NAFCC.

Ms. Rouse is a leader in the family day care community in her area, and is author of a 208 page manual entitled "ABC's and 123's of Quality Child Care" — a "how to" book with complete basic guidance and information for the operation of programs for young children. She is also a consultant and master provider for the issuance of the CDA credential.

Since her recent graduation from a "Montessori in the Home" course conducted by **Elza Haley**, Ms. Rouse has

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Child building tower of cubes at Rooster Loft Montessori in Waukesha, Wisconsin

IMAC Renews Accreditation for IMS Teacher Education

On May 8, 1996, the IMAC Advisory Committee met in Silver Spring, MD to approve for continuing accreditation the Society and its teacher education program entitled "Independent Study Course". This action follows the IMS review committee on-site visit and recommendation for a further four-year term of accreditation. By consensus, the committee voted to approve the IMS review committee's recommendation for a further four-year term.

Present at the meeting were committee members **Jerry Duvall**, **Linda Rusthoven**, **Alexander Riddel**, **H. Kent Baker** and **Richard Matteson**. **Lee Havis**, IMAC chairman, was also present to answer questions. In addition, **Bill James**, representative of the U.S. Department of Education was present to observe the proceedings as part of the Department's review of the IMAC petition for federal recognition.

The Advisory Committee also considered the progress of "Woodlands Training Centre" in its preparation of a self-study report. Other discussion centered around the role of modern technology and how this is transforming the typical traditional approach of classroom instruction. Havis particularly noted his appreciation for the committee's support for the IMAC approach of inclusive accreditation for the

Maryland Legislature Votes on Educational Freedom

Del. **Dana Dembrow** (D), Montgomery Co., member of the Maryland General Assembly, and member of the IMAC Advisory Committee, entered two bills to support greater "educational freedom" in the state. These bills, HB 920 and HB 994 would allow non-traditional alternatives such as Montessori schools and teacher preparation institutions to operate without the current mandatory state "certification". Co-sponsoring with Dembrow and supporting the bills were Dels. **Morgan** (R), Prince George's Co. [HB 920 only], **Kittleman** (R) Howard Co., **Beck** (R) Montgomery Co., and **Jacobs** (R) Anne Arundel Co.

On March 13, 1996, the House Ways and Means Committee voted against passage of HB 920, with delegates **Beck** (R) Montgomery Co., and **Rzepkowski** (R) Anne Arundel Co., casting favorable votes. In the Appropriations Committee, HB 994 was given an unfavorable report on April 16, 1996, with delegates **Martha Klima** (R) Baltimore, and **Robert Baldwin** (R) Anne Arundel Co. voting in favor

of the bill. **Lee Havis**, the Society's executive director and principal coordinator of support for the bills, expressed his appreciation to the supporting legislators. He is now seeking to gain more support for a further submittal in the next term.

Havis noted that HB 920 and 994 were defeated in committee due to lack of public awareness and attention to the issue of "educational freedom" — and for the value of free-market competition to improve the quality of education. In correspondence with the governor, he commented that "When government attempts to censor, define, interpret, standardize and control what is 'adequate' curriculum and what is a proper 'diploma' in a philosophy such as 'Montessori', it interferes with creative growth and development in the free marketplace of ideas."

While the governor responded to Havis that "We concur with your suggestion that there needs to be innovation in the field of teacher preparation" and "I am an enthusiastic supporter of growth and development in the private sector", he still declined to support either HB 920 or 994

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Inner Preparation

by Lee Havis

"One who would become a teacher according to our system must examine himself...this inner preparation will give the balance and poise he will need."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.153

Montessori teaching requires a considerable inner preparation to effectively create a "normalizing" environment for children — to allow the child's true "normalized" nature to fully emerge in harmony with the infinite and eternal laws of nature. Without such inner preparation, our being as "personality" tends to project itself on the child who then acts out the drama of our own various limiting beliefs, prejudices and expectations. To prepare ourselves to see the child's true "normalized" nature, we must use our imagination to expand beyond the limited perception of the child as being only its physical body, superficial personality and outer behavior.

Imagination

"...an intending Montessori teacher...must keep her imagination alive...The Montessori teacher is constantly looking for a child who is not yet there...In her imagination she sees that single normalized type."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.276

Imagination helps us visualize the "normalized" spirit within each child — even when a particular child may be showing considerable negative drama and misbehavior. By contrast, traditional teaching has no such inner vision of a "normalized" child — directing itself instead only to the superficial external goals of transmitting pre-determined factual knowledge or achieving some specified level of academic performance. The teacher's dictatorial, controlling "personality" therefore becomes the greatest obstacle to the child's true normal growth and development.

The Greatest Obstacle

"The teacher's happy task is removing the obstacles, beginning with those which she herself is likely to present (for the teacher can be the greatest obstacle of all)."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spont. Act. in Ed.*, p.264

Montessori teaching aims to remove all detrimental influences from the child's environment — including particularly the teacher's own "personality" which is usually the greatest obstacle of all. Inner

preparation is needed to control the "adult personality" — to become aware of our own thoughtless negative or neglectful habits with children. Such a penetrating self-knowledge is the primary basis for successful progress in Montessori teaching.

Self-Knowledge

"...adults...are confronted with the problem of self-knowledge, that is of hidden laws that direct the psychic development of man."

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

Self-knowledge guides us to discover the laws of nature that work within us in harmony with all creation — then to apply this knowledge in our external actions to create a "normalizing" environment for children. Montessori teachers must learn to see themselves as committed to such fundamental natural laws as (1) "Observation"; (2) "Individual Liberty"; and (3) "Preparation of the Environment". These three Montessori principles can give stability, substance and direction to our work with children — to help control the outward expressions of our hidden drama of "personality" in the child's environment.

Hidden Drama

"An inner wall is built up which closes the spirit and conceals it as a defense against the world. Behind these multiple barriers a hidden drama is unfolded."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.160

The "adult personality" plays out the hidden drama of an early childhood past full of many unconscious emotional attachments, repressed fears and false assumptions about reality. Outward evidence of this inner struggle for self-expression and survival is seen in the "unnormlized" behavior of the children we supervise. Disorder, fantasy, dependency and misbehavior in children should therefore always make us aware of the terrible lie of our own inner being as "personality".

The Terrible Lie

"Conventions which camouflage a man's true feelings are a spiritual lie which help him adapt to the organized deviations of society...This is the terrible lie lurking in the deepest recesses of the subconscious."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.176

The terrible lie that denies our true nature is reinforced and supported by the ordinary repression and abandonment of

the "normalized" child in society. In our weakness, we tend to adapt to the illusion of external effects rather than challenge them through our own independent judgment, action and experience for the "normalized" child. Many unknown errors persist because of the widespread failure of inner preparation by teachers and parents.

Unknown Error

"The adult must find within himself the still unknown error that prevents him from seeing the child as he is. If such a preparation is not made...he can go no further."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.15
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Look for the
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Lee Havis, Executive Director

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Moment of Peril

by Lee Havis

The Distracted Child

Brian shows the lack of attention that is characteristic of the distracted "unnormlized" child (see *Observer*, March, 1996). The teacher, however, has become impatient and discouraged with her many efforts to interest Brian in something — and is now thinking it may be best to leave him alone to work out his interests on his own.

As always, we look for the cause of Brian's lack of normality in his environment, not in Brian himself. We must therefore analyze the "other children", "physical objects" and "adult personality". To "control the environment, not the child", the teacher must persist in her efforts even though she may not see an immediate result to her efforts.

When "other children" are detrimental in Brian's environment, the teacher must patiently re-direct them back to their own goal-directed activity. If "physical objects" are being taken out and not returned, then the teacher may have to place a firm hand on some new piece of equipment to get Brian's attention to return to his prior object of original interest.

But the "adult personality" is much more difficult to control — in view of the teacher's apparently uncertain conviction about the reality of the "normalized" child. Brian is at risk of being abandoned by the teacher because of her limited concept of "individual liberty" in this situation.

To control her "personality" tendencies towards abandonment and undue negative interference with Brian, the teacher should verbalize considerably about any conceivable element of reality in the environment — to distract Brian from his vague mental wanderings into fantasy and idle play. Once Brian does begin to concentrate, the teacher must then not intervene with even the slightest praise or encouragement.

Brian's current lack of concentration has its historical reference in prior interference and abandonment of Brian's work — so the teacher must work with considerable patience and persistence to detach her presence and attention from Brian at the critical moment of concentration. Thereafter, Brian will acquire more of the characteristic qualities of normal being, including persistence to task and a more focused attitude towards his own work and interests in the environment.

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Inner Preparation

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While we are usually capable of correcting errors that we can see ourselves, we tend to deny, justify and defend those that are unknown. If others observe and notice our unknown errors, we may well doubt the truth or validity of their observation because of our own doubts and prejudices about Montessori principles. In the end, we can only judge the truth for ourselves — to sort out the valid comments from the others that persist in the great chaos of ideas that exist on the subject of "Montessori" in society.

Chaos of Ideas

"He who is bewildered by a chaos of ideas cannot accept a truth which arrives unexpectedly in the unprepared field."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spont. Act. in Ed.*, p.233

Since "Montessori" in society is so pervasively identified with such superficial vanities as certification, materials and recognition from others, we are easily led astray into a chaos of distracting ideas. Adopting such a limited external view of "Montessori" destroys its value as a creative force for the emergence of the "normalized" child. By contrast, "Montessori" as an internal reality is constantly giving us an opportunity to discover the true "normalized" child which arises from the prepared order we create by our own thoughtful inner preparation.

Prepared Order

"It is not the accumulation of direct knowledge of things that form the man of letters...it is the prepared order established in the mind which is to receive such knowledge."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Act. in Ed.*, p.206

The prepared inner order for Montessori teaching is our growing commitment to the underlying laws of nature. The idea of the "normalized" child then becomes our central focus of attention as we put these laws into practice with children. Even as we act in an external way with children we must therefore constantly engage in a careful preparation of the spirit.

Preparation of the Spirit

"The real preparation for education is a study of oneself. The training of the teacher...is something far more than a learning of ideas. It includes the training of character, it is a preparation of the spirit."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.130

Since the "normalized" child resides in the domain of the spirit, we must prepare
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Book Review

Montessori Today

by Paul Polk Lillard

Schocken Books, 1996

Lillard offers here her follow-up to the well-known "Montessori — a Modern Approach". Perhaps the most useful aspect of this publication is its descriptions of the "Great Lessons" and "Key Lessons" which have been associated with curriculum approaches in Montessori elementary education. Also, Lillard provides her own observation and perspective of a specific visit to a working elementary environment.

The author wisely cautions the reader that some of her comments may not "endure" because of their lack of basis in universal principles — and this is certainly worth considering concerning here interpretation of "play" in Montessori education and the apparent need for a teacher to force a "separation" of children to resolve a persistent "misbehavior" problem.

Although the portion about standards in Montessori teacher education did not mention the IMAC accrediting agency, Lillard did state in a follow-up letter that she would suitably revise this section in future editions. I would also hope that a further revision includes more information about the concept of "cosmic education" and the critical nature of "inner preparation" for the teacher.

In sum, Lillard's "Montessori Today" provides a good general summary of basic Montessori theory at all age levels — and some particularly useful details and ideas for Montessori elementary teaching. Her words help us visualize what she sees in her everyday experiences in a Montessori elementary classroom.

Maryland Legislation

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— stating that the current requirements are "essential to the operation of any school". However, he did acknowledge that over 400 church-related schools (about 80% of the total) have declined to comply with the so-called "essential" certification requirements.

Havis stated that HB 920 and 994 initiated a constructive dialogue in Maryland on the fundamental issue of "educational freedom" — and that further efforts may be more successful because of a greater public awareness. He indicated that he would persist with other concerned Maryland citizens to fight for similar legislative change in Maryland and elsewhere — to help provide the necessary conditions for the "new education".

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Inner Preparation

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ourselves in this same spiritual way to discover this reality within. Such an inner spiritual preparation then elevates us beyond the physical plane to see the "normalized" spirit in others as well. Mysterious internal activities then move us to effectively practice the idea of "control the environment, not the child".

Internal Activities

"The things which are useful to our outer world are those that arouse an interest. Our internal world is created upon a selection from the external world acquired for and in harmony with our internal activities."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Spontaneous Act. in Ed.*, p.160

Internal activity in Montessori teaching leads us naturally to reach out to pursue our interest and gain support for our experience of the "normalized" child. However, this natural inquiry with others may become considerably deterred by the limiting concept and perspective of "Montessori" we find outside ourselves. Therefore, we must constantly return to the counsel of inner preparation — following a path of personal spiritual development that expands our own perception and discernment of the truth within.

Spiritual Development

"All spiritual development is a conquest of consciousness, which assumes to itself something that was formerly outside. It is by going along this road that civilization advances."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Secret of Childhood*, p.15

Spiritual development in Montessori teaching is the process of internalizing the reality of Dr. Montessori's great discovery and vision of the "normalized" child. Only when we experience this "Montessori"

within ourselves can we effectively create a proper "normalizing" environment for the children we serve. No external type of "Montessori" will ever create the "new education" in the world — but we can do so ourselves as individuals by our own inner preparation for this great vision of the "normalized" child.

Evaluation of Basic Skills Test Now Available

A new test of basic skills is now available from the Society — to measure basic concept understanding in such areas as reading, mathematics and writing. This "Evaluation of Basic Skills" was developed by Lee Havis to meet the need for a simple and quick, yet reliable evaluation instrument to use with students from age 3-18.

The test can be administered to an individual child in less than 30 minutes — and provides a very clear picture of the student's concept understanding in all basic skill areas of learning. It is standardized to give a comparison of performance level with other children of the same age. Montessori practitioners will particularly appreciate the test as an aid to diagnosis and analysis of learning difficulties — and to help guide lesson presentation procedures for academic content.

The test start-up kit includes the administration manual, 50 individual test forms and 50 special pre-test and post-test forms for measuring specific phonetic reading skills. To order, send \$39.95 (includes postage) or write for more details to: IMS, 912 Thayer Ave. #207, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Tel. (301) 589-1127.

Rooster Loft Montessori

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been exploring ways to make this type of teacher preparation for parents more widely available in the family day care community. She is therefore planning to organize such a course which would seek accreditation through the IMAC agency.

Ms. Rouse indicated that her course would provide regular seminars in the evenings and on weekends over a period of about one year. The course would be designed especially for "family day care providers", with periodic evaluation classroom observation visits conducted throughout the program's operation. After graduation, there would be further continuing education required to keep the course credential current.

For further information, contact: Sally Rouse, Rooster Loft Montessori, W 243 57125 Cameron Dr., Waukesha, WI 53186, tel. (414) 662-2266.

Moment of Peril

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The Anti-Social Child

8 year old Nathan seems to resist every opportunity or occasion for a group activity. When it is time to gather together to schedule work for the day in the morning, Nathan refuses to participate. At the end of the day, Nathan is unprepared and disinterested in discussing with others their work and activity during the day. The more the teacher tries to draw Nathan into the group activity, the more he seems to rebel with sullen indifference or open hostility. *What to do?*

Answer in *Observer*, September, 1996