



The Montessori OBSERVER

Possessive Instinct

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

Task Force Convened for Educational Reform

The governor of Maryland (U.S.A.) recently impaneled a special task force to undertake a comprehensive review of education in the state. Known as the "Task Force on Education Funding, Equity, Accountability, and Partnership", it is chaired by former state legislator, **Gene Coughlin**. Membership includes various legislators, public education officials and other persons selected for their interest in state education. The task force has been particularly concerned with services for "at risk" children and how public/private partnerships could better improve education in the state.

In October, 1997, the task force held a series of public hearings on the relevant issues — to include the ideas and opinions of a broad spectrum of the general

Cont'd. on Page 3, Col. 4

Maryland Public Assembly Approves its Platform of Issues

On October 11, 1997, the Platform Committee of the *Maryland Public Assembly* met and agreed to a Platform of issues which addresses a wide range of concerns of the people of Maryland. Thereafter, the platform was officially accepted by the Assembly's Central Committee. **Lee Havis**, Assembly chairperson indicated that "I think this platform very well conforms with Montessori principles, and will provide a most suitable basis for the Assembly's endorsement of public interest candidates in Maryland."

After adopting the Platform, the Central Committee circulated it to the Assembly members along with a set of "Endorsement Rules" and a "Candidate Selection" questionnaire, proposed by Havis. These documents, when finally adopted, will provide the basis to endorse and support specific candidates for public office in the state.

The Assembly's Platform is divided into six separate sections, *Electoral/Political Reform, Education, Environment, Human Resources, Budget, Taxes and Revenue, and Foreign Affairs*. Under each section, various planks are

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 1



Participating in the Montessori conference in Columbia, South Carolina are (from left) Lisa Rutstrom, David Kennison and Bianca Ricchione — September 20-21, 1997.

Montessori Conference in South Carolina Experiencing the Truth — September 20-21, 1997

The Society's 1997 "Creating the New Education" conference was held in Columbia, South Carolina on September 20-21, 1997. Participating were Montessori educators and parents from the states of South Carolina, North Carolina and Maryland. The local host school, *College of Early Learning*, was represented by its staff and many of its active parent body.

The conference particularly considered the important distinction between "knowledge" and "experience" in Montessori teaching; i.e., how to experience true Montessori teaching beyond the level of its academic knowledge or theoretical agreement in words alone. This distinction between "words" and "action" was recognized as a central concern for all Montessori practitioners.

Lee Havis, Society executive director who led the conference, stated that "the experience of the 'normalized' child is central to effective Montessori teaching — and I have seen how our conference really draws out and support this to occur. On the first day, the participants become aware of various detrimental habits of their personality expression with children. This seems to prepare for the experience of the second day when the *normalized* child tends to spontaneously emerge of itself. This experience appears to be related to the participants noticing their being different from their personality."

After the conference, Havis observed and consulted with staff and parents at the *College of Early Learning*. He noted that "I am particularly impressed with the interest of some parents at the school to hold further regular meetings to continue the process of inner preparation we set in motion at the conference. I think this will considerably support and sustain the conference experience in the lives of all persons connected with the school."

Havis also noted the recent election of **David Kennison**, a principal staff member of the local host school, to serve as president of the South Carolina chapter of the *American Civil Liberty Union (ACLU)*. This organization plays an important role in protecting constitutional rights in the United States. He indicated that "David's service as state ACLU president is an opportunity to bring greater visibility to such Montessori principles as 'individual liberty' in society. I congratulate the membership of the ACLU for its vote of confidence and support for David's leadership in these efforts."

Further Society conferences will be scheduled according to interest. Contact the Society to help schedule a specific date and location in your area. Contact: IMS, 912 Thayer Ave., #207, Silver Spring, MD 20910, tel. (301) 589-1127

POSSESSIVE INSTINCT

by Lee Havis

"Usually when we see something we feel a desire to possess it. The more a person possesses, the more he wants to possess. All men, rich and poor alike, want to possess things. And we really should think of them not as normal men, but as sick men."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Education and Peace*, p.89

The desire to own and control things is well-known and common in the ordinary adult personality. Not so well-known perhaps is the deviation of this possessive instinct from our true normal nature as discovered by Dr. Montessori. Such a possessive instinct has its origin in the formation of the abnormal child.

The Abnormal Child

"...In the abnormal child we see clear evidence of this urge to possess...He is a child who does not work, who has sensations but does not love."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Education and Peace*, p.89

When the young child's normal desire to freely work with objects is frustrated by a restrictive, unstimulating environment, the child will reactivity seek to possess the objects as an end in itself. Such an abnormal possessive tendency can then become firmly fixed in the child's whole personality formation for life. This abnormality often emerges as part of a pattern of fatigue and hatred towards all forms of interaction and engagement with the environment.

Fatigue and Hatred

"Fatigue and hatred are dark shadows of the urge to possess that cloud men's minds."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Education and Peace*, p.90

The possessive child tends to use objects as toys — showing an underlying fatigue and boredom in their use after only a brief period of time. Whereas a normal child will concentrate on an object of interest for a considerable period of time, the possessive child may well consume its entire mental energy in moving impatiently from one object to the next — seeking only their momentary possession and control. Even children with a very retiring temperament can show this abnormal desire to possess and control physical objects.

Retiring Temperament

"Children of a retiring temperament...tend to accumulate and conceal things."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.164

The possessive instinct is often evident in shy, retiring children through their patterns of subtle manipulation, stealing and concealment of objects. Teachers must remain particularly vigilant of such children — to assure that important pieces of equipment are not lost or stolen from their proper place in the environment. Underlying all these possessive behaviors is the child's driving desire for power.

Desire for Power

"...associated with possessiveness is a desire for power...however becomes diverted when...it is reduced to mere covetousness."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.165

When a young child cannot gain power through a normal use and interaction with objects, it must then seek to satisfy this basic need through the mere possession and control of such objects. Montessori teaching helps children turn away from these deviated expressions of power — by offering the opportunity for free use of a wide variety of well-ordered physical objects. The Montessori environment provides not only many things for children to freely handle, but also the opportunity to use them constructively for a stimulating mental activity.

Things

"If a child finds no stimuli for the activities which would contribute to his development, he is attracted simply to 'things' and desires to possess them."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.163

The things around a child will ideally stimulate the child to create within itself a fundamental integration of the order and harmony of the laws of nature. The Montessori environment therefore arranges and presents the physical objects in an orderly manner — to stimulate each child to choose those things which uniquely correspond with their own individual needs and interests at the moment. Children in such a prepared environment are therefore constantly using things in harmony with the needs and interests of others.

Using Things

"It has been said that man's greatest delight is to possess things. No! Man's greatest delight is using them!...love impels the child not towards possession of an object, but towards the work he can do with it."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Education and Peace*, p.57

Children normally desire things to serve their own process of inner mental formation — using things according to individual interest in self-development. Montessori teachers support this individualized, self-directed learning experience with materials by following such

Cont'd. on Page 3, Col. 2

Look for the
March, 1998 Observer
featuring
BALANCE

The Montessori Observer
ISSN 0889-5643
published by
INTERNATIONAL MONTESSORI SOCIETY
912 Thayer Ave., Suite 207
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
Tel. (301) 589-1127 • e-mail: havis@erols.com
Worldwide Web:
<http://www.wdn.com/trust/ims>
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.

© 1997

Moment of Peril

by Lee Havis

FANTASY PLAY

Although Frank's "fantasy play" with play dough is rather quiet and passive (see *Observer*, September, 1997), it is nonetheless unnormalized behavior that requires the teacher's attention. In such a moment of peril, the "adult personality" is the primary detrimental influence that must be controlled.

The fact that Frank's mother seems unduly concerned for his academic performance is a clue that pressure from home may be an aggravating cause of the child's resistance to more normal work with materials in the classroom. Nevertheless, the teacher must consider her own personal action to "control the environment, not the child" in the classroom — and this can best be accomplished through some direct verbal communication with the child itself.

Frank's use of play dough here has gone beyond the level of constructive work. The length of time involved, the make-believe element and the fairly low level of intellectual activity (making balls and snakes) all evidence its essential purpose to escape from reality. The teacher can then safely interfere with this activity through any form of positive, friendly conversation — perhaps to discuss how the play dough can be used to make number or letter shapes, using other materials as models to copy.

If other children come around while the teacher is talking to Frank, she might ask Frank to help answer some question or solve the problem raised by the other child. Also, the teacher could comment on the activity of the other children or any other element of the environment.

Once Frank shows an interest in some other piece of work, the teacher should allow him to proceed accordingly. This other activity will gradually lead Frank to more normal engagement with reality and work in the environment.

Sneaky and Destructive

3 year old Jason has been a friendly, quiet and cooperative child for many months in the classroom. However, more recently various objects have become broken, damaged or missing in the environment, and the teacher thinks it might be Jason. However, when she questions Jason about the matter, he denies any knowledge with a quizzical "I don't know" response. *What to do?*

Answer in March, 1998, *Observer*

Possessive Instinct

Cont'd. from Page 2, Col. 3

basic laws of nature as (1) *Observation*; (2) *Individual Liberty* and (3) *Preparation of the Environment*. These three fundamental Montessori principles enable children to learn through their own sensorial experience with the objects themselves — rather than entirely through the teacher's spoken words as is common in traditional education.

Spoken Words

"Children find it very hard to concentrate on spoken words, but they have no difficulty concentrating on objects."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Education and Peace*, p.80

Since traditional education offers instruction primarily through the teacher's spoken words, young children are usually frustrated in their desire to learn from the order and stability of physical objects. By contrast, Montessori education presents the objects themselves as the primary means of instruction — the adult serving essentially as a guide and observer. Such an indirect type of teaching ultimately leads to a profound "normalization" of the child's entire way of being.

Normalization

"...normalization...causes the disappearance of many childhood traits...sloth, greed..."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Secret of Childhood*, p.154

"Normalization" occurs in the young child through concentrated work with physical objects — revealing its true nature of spontaneous self-discipline, order and harmony with the entire environment. The *normalized* child will then reflect its natural manner of non-possessive, constructive use of objects. Such work is spontaneous, goal-directed activity that becomes the constant habit and tendency of the child in relation to its entire physical environment.

Work

"The child in our prepared environment does not play. He works, and greed disappears."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Education and Peace*, p.107

The child's normal response to objects is to work with them in a state of complete concentration and focus of attention. Such an intellectual activity with objects extends far beyond the ordinary play of children with toys. The *normalized* child shows a real love for the environment — an entirely separate path of development from the greedy cravings of children for mere sensory stimulation.

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 3

Montessori Observer, November, 1997

Task Force on Education

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 1

public. A final report is due in December, 1997, and could provide the basis for significant legislative action in the 1998 session of the General Assembly.

Representing the interests of Montessori education, Lee Havis presented testimony before each of the three task force sub-committees; i.e., *Funding Equity*, *Accountability* and *Public/Private Partnership*. He offered various proposals to improve the conditions for Montessori education in the state.

Before the sub-committee on *Funding Equity*, Havis urged that state education funds be more fairly distributed to the local subdivisions. He specifically opposed the practice of programmatic decision-making at the state level — offering instead a precise mathematical formula to adjust the amount to each jurisdiction based on its relative wealth and local tax effort for education.

Before the sub-committee on *Accountability*, he offered proposals for (1) a "school choice program" (2) re-organization of the public school system of Baltimore City and (3) more objective state-wide testing and evaluation.

The proposal for re-organization of public education in Baltimore would establish local education committees at the

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 2

Marketplace

Montessori Teachers

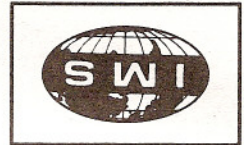
Teaching opportunities exist in private American and international schools around the world. Learn about these schools and discover how you can carry your education career overseas! The Educational Staffing program of International Schools Services has placed K-12 teachers and administrators in overseas schools since 1955. Most candidates obtain their overseas teaching positions by attending our U.S.-based International Recruitment Centers (IRCs) where ISS candidates have the potential to interview with overseas school heads seeking new staff. You must be an active ISS candidate to attend an IRC. Applicants must have a bachelor's degree and two years of current relevant experience. IRC registration materials are provided upon approval of your completed ISS application. For more information, please view our web site at www.iss.edu, or contact us at: International Schools Services, PO Box 5910, Princeton, NJ 08543, Tel. 609-452-0990, Fax: 609-452-0990, E-mail: edustaffing@iss.edu

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

Public Assembly

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 1

listed which affirm the Assembly's underlying purpose "to expand awareness and inquiry into matters of significant concern to the general public and to form a basis for the evaluation and endorsement of candidates". (Platform, Preamble)

Under the section *Education*, six specific planks are included — one which states "We support greater freedom for operation of non-public education by reducing unnecessary, unfair and excessive government regulation". Havis particularly pointed out that "this plank relates directly to the more effective operation of Montessori education in Maryland. It would specifically address the need to change such laws that presently restrict opportunity for Montessori education to freely operate in the state".

Havis indicated that the Assembly intends to establish itself as a "political action committee" with the state of Maryland — to enable its more active and effective functioning in the collection and distribution of funds for political purposes. He stated that "the appointment of a treasurer is vital to our filling as a political action committee — and will be an important step to assure a more effective management of our financial affairs."

The Assembly is open to all Maryland voters, on a non-partisan basis. Its organization and activities are reported to the general public on the internet at: <http://www.wdn.com/trust/mpa>.

For more information, to participate or to learn how similar public interest political organization may be established elsewhere, contact: Lee Havis, Chairperson, Maryland Public Assembly, 912 Thayer Ave., #207, Silver Spring, MD 20910, tel. (301) 589-0733.

Task Force on Education

Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 3

neighborhood level — to enable the people of Baltimore to participate more directly in the operation of their area schools. The Havis plan for a "school choice program" would assure greater local control in education — providing a wider opportunity for such innovative funding as vouchers for non-government education. Havis also proposed more objective, individualized testing of children, such as available through the TRUST TUTORING "Evaluation of Basic Skills".

Before the sub-committee on *Public/Private Partnership*, Havis offered specific proposals to assure greater educational freedom for private education — by providing an alternative to current mandatory state certification which has been employed so repressively over Montessori education. As an exhibit to justify the need for corrective action, Havis offered a newspaper article describing how mandatory certification was employed to prohibit the Society from operating Montessori teacher education in the state. He also offered language for specific bills to correct the situation.

Havis conceded the lack of success of similar prior efforts for educational reform in the state. However, he also noted that "the current task force chairman, Gene Counihan, helped pass a bill to free in-home tutoring from the burden of mandatory government certification. This legislation made possible the operation of TRUST TUTORING in the state since 1992. Perhaps Mr. Counihan, as task force chairman, will support greater freedom for other forms of Montessori education as well."

Possessive Instinct

Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 2

Love

"Two paths lie open in the development of personality — one that leads to the man who loves and one that leads to the man who possesses. One leads to...the human slave who becomes the prisoner of his possessions...who comes to hate his fellows."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Education and Peace*, p.57

The possessive instinct is an abnormal path of development that ultimately leads to hatred, separation and fear in the social setting. By contrast, Montessori education views objects as tools for self-directed learning in harmony with the overall well-being of others. As we more consistently apply the three fundamental Montessori principles with young children, a normal love of the environment will show itself in many positive ways — and the ordinary possessive instinct will gradually disappear entirely from the human personality.

**PERCEPTUAL-MOTOR DEVELOPMENT
MOVEMENT EDUCATION**

Guidebooks & Materials

Take your pick!
Preschool to the 6th Grade. With & Without Equipment
Preassigned Activities, You Assign, or Mix and Match
We've Got the Right Program for You!

Call Toll-Free 1-800-524-9091 for Free Catalog!

or see our catalog at:
www.front-row-ex.com
or write:
Front Row Experience
540 Discovery Bay Blvd.
Discovery Bay, CA 94914-9454