



The Montessori OBSERVER

MORALITY

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Child working on trinomial cube at Mrs. Ronda's Montessori school

Mrs. Ronda's Montessori School in Huntsville, Alabama

Ronda Penuel established her Montessori school in Huntsville, Alabama in September, 1978 — to make her own uniquely personal contribution to the work of the *new education*. Before 1978, she had been teaching in several area Montessori schools.

Mrs. Ronda's Montessori School includes an extended day and a half-day program for children 2½ through 7 years of age, with Art, music, French, and computers provided to assist in broadening the program. Ronda states that "there is always something exciting and enriching going on in the classrooms! Currently we are observing the metamorphosis of the butterfly, as we watch Painted Lady butterflies emerge from their chrysalis!"

Mrs. Penuel is particularly proud of the diversity of the school curriculum, its staff and enrollment. As a Montessori school recognized with the Society, it is committed to operate according to specific written standards. She states that "one of the things that attracted me to IMS is their broad, inclusive standards and their interest in cohesion of the many Montessori entities."

For further information, contact: Ronda Penuel, Mrs. Ronda's Montessori School, 3102 Leeman Ferry Rd., Huntsville, AL 35801, Tel. (205) 883-5888.

Public Assembly Endorses Candidates in Maryland

In July and August, 1998, the *Maryland Public Assembly* has been conducting various endorsement sessions through that state — applying Montessori principles in the field of politics, to help voters identify candidates who best reflect the broad public interest of the people of Maryland. A platform of issues has been developed to guide this process "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."

Organized in March, 1997, this grassroots, non-partisan citizen organization is open to all persons of voting age in the state. The essential aims are to preserve and protect individual liberty and self-governing democracy, to assure efficiency

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IMAC Progress Update

On June 2-3, 1998, the IMAC Board of Directors met in Silver Spring, MD to discuss progress in the agency's work of improving the quality of Montessori teacher education. Sharmini DeZylva from Sri Lanka attended with Lee Havis, director of IMS. At this time, the Accreditation Committee and Generic Review Committee also met to consider various issues concerning the approval of self-study reports from programs in Washington State, Sri Lanka, Singapore and Namibia, Africa.

At the June meeting, Lee Havis, IMAC Chairperson, also indicated his intention to continue speaking out for fairness in the government recognition of accrediting agencies. He reported that he had submitted written comments to the US Department of Education on this matter, and plans to appear before a hearing where this issue will be raised later in the year.

Havis also indicated his efforts to gain IMAC recognition with other government agencies — to establish its accreditation as a basis for quality assurance of Montessori teacher education with the general public, as widely as possible throughout the world.

For more information about IMAC and its accreditation standards, contact: IMAC, 912 Thayer Ave., #207, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

MONTESSORI CONFERENCE

Creating the New Education
Inner Preparation for Montessori teaching

Annapolis, Maryland
September 26-27, 1998

The Society's two-day weekend conference, "Creating the New Education" provides a psychological "inner preparation" for Montessori teaching — in-depth study and experience in applying Montessori principles with children

Watch for summary of proceedings in
"November Observer"

MORALITY

by Lee Havis

"When we occupy ourselves with the 'moral education' of our children, we ought to ask ourselves if we really love them and if we are sincere in our wishes for their 'morality'."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Act. n Ed.*, p.288

Morality is a necessary element of any educational approach to the child — a basic value system of right and wrong that is vital to any group learning experience. Montessori education teaches such morality indirectly through the adult's commitment to such natural laws as (1) "Observation"; (2) "Individual Liberty" and (3) "Preparation of the Environment". These three fundamental laws of nature can help us considerably in applying the basic moral principle of respect for others in a group.

Basic Moral Principle

"The responsibility for one's actions...represent collective efforts. The basic moral principle requires a commitment from the individual; the commitment of the individual to the group."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *From Child. to Adolescence.* p.19

Morality implies a certain balance of our own personal needs, interests and actions with those of others — to reconcile the "individual liberty" of one with the total interrelated harmony of all. In Montessori education, this basic moral principle helps guide each child to naturally adapt to the necessary order and good functioning of the whole. By contrast, the ordinary moral organization of the school is centered not on such a natural adaptation to order and harmony with others, but rather on the teacher's overriding need and purpose to impose a prescribed curriculum on all.

Moral Organization of the School

"Prizes and punishment...are exponents of the moral organization of the school...it is the moral purpose to accustom children to 'suffer'."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Act. in Ed.*, p.315

Traditional education judges children as either right or wrong, good or bad, according to their obedience to the absolute authority and control of the teacher. Such a dictatorial moral organization tends to manipulate and control the child through various forms of rewards, punishment, grades, rules and tests. Although this type of educational approach may include certain moral codes for proper behavior, even the very best of

classroom rules cannot overcome a fundamental lack of character development that has occurred before in the formative period of early childhood.

Moral Codes

"We cannot become moral by committing codes and their application to memory, for memory might fail us a thousand times, and the slightest passion might overcome us."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Act. in Ed.*, p.326

The teacher can humiliate, blame or shame the child through moral codes and classroom rules — but she cannot assure a true natural growth of morality within the child. In Montessori education, the young child spontaneously adapts to the patterns of proper social behavior by observing the example of the teacher and other children. This is a very different kind of education from the ordinary adult-controlled approach of traditional teaching with children.

Different Kind of Education

"...if character were allowed its natural way of formation, and if we gave not moral dissertation but the chance to act constructively, then the world would need a very different kind of education."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind.* p.214

Montessori teaching follows such principles as "individual liberty" — to allow each child to develop its own morality in harmony with the group. Here, the adult seeks to create a positive, supportive environment where each child can express its own normal moral instincts towards prudence, dignity, trust, reliability and sympathy for others. The child's own internal sense of right and wrong is thereby allowed to establish itself as a stable aspect of its whole personality.

Internal Sense

"...normal persons, although entirely ignorant of the laws never transgress them, owing to an internal sense which guides them."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Act. in Ed.*, p.326

Nature provides us all with an internal sense of right and wrong — a "conscience" which can guide us towards ethical decision-making in all areas of life. This inner moral compass normally begins to develop as an integral aspect of our character in early childhood, and forms the basis for all normal social behavior thereafter. True morality is therefore not brought about by rules and lectures, but rather by addressing the question of life that develops within the child from the moment of conception.

Question of Life

"...the moral question...is a question of life, a question of 'nature', and one which cannot be solved by external eventualities."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Act. in Ed.*, p.322

Children tend to learn morality through their everyday experiences with others — to choose what is good over what is evil as a matter of logic and common sense. Good behavior tends to reward us with true inner peace and social harmony, while the alternative brings only short term or illusory benefits at best. Montessori teaching therefore follows a natural path of moral education from within the child, by offering many opportunities for the child's free choice and self-directed social interaction with others.

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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

Discouraged and Frustrated

5 year old Jeremy is frustrated and discouraged (see *Observer*, May, 1998), objecting to any invitation or suggestion to work by the teacher. He quickly tires of his own activity, and turns to disturbing the work of others. The teacher must nonetheless apply the approach of "control the environment, not the child" as best she can — to overcome a considerable pattern of negativity in Jeremy which has been built up in the relationship with his mother from home.

In this "moment of peril", the teacher's "personality" must be more carefully controlled — to remove its detrimental influences from Jeremy's environment. Jeremy's discouragement and frustration is really that of the teacher in projected form — and so she must act with greater persistence to restrain any of her own negative speech or action with Jeremy. She must persist in her positive, encouraging communication with Jeremy at every opportunity.

With the mother, the teacher should make a special effort each day to say something positive and encouraging about Jeremy's progress towards normalization — even if the success is only some brief moment of attention or self-directed activity with the most simple of practical life activities. In time, this path of encouragement, positive communication and faith in Jeremy's true nature will result in his concentrated work and normalization in the environment.

Picking, Poking and Pushing

3 year old Richard is inattentive about his hands, which seem to be constantly poking, pushing and picking at the furniture, carpet and materials in the classroom. The teacher feels like saying "hands off" to Richard almost all the time — to preserve and protect the beauty and function of the physical environment. Instead, however, she tries to interest Richard in some constructive practical life activity to do with his hands. However, Richard usually declines any invitation to work — as he returns to his thoughtless and destructive picking, poking and pushing with his hands. What to do?

Answer in *Observer*, November, 1998

Morality

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Moral Education

"It is at seven years that one may note the beginning of an orientation towards moral questions, toward the judgment of acts...the great problem of Good and Evil now confronts him...The seven to 12 year old period, then constitutes one of particular importance for moral education."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *From Child. to Adolescence*, p.5

While the young child develops itself primarily by working with physical objects, the older child seeks out a more abstract and social form of moral education. The Montessori elementary environment therefore allows children to identify and solve various moral problems through suitable discussion, abstract reasoning and consensus rule-making among themselves. The teacher helps this self-directed moral development by giving children work that will stimulate and encourage their own further independent research and study into the many perplexing practical aspects of social behavior.

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Public Assembly

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and integrity in the operation of government and to support free enterprise and fair business practices for all.

Prior to each endorsing session, candidates were qualified for consideration by submitting a questionnaire with information about their background and issues relating to Budget, Taxes and Resources, Electoral/Political Reform, Education, Environment and Human Resources. Members were then able to review these questionnaires, and engage in a back and forth discussion with the candidates or their representatives at each of several endorsing sessions held around the state.

Final endorsements were made as follows: **United States** [U.S. Senate] Kenneth Wayman; **Baltimore County** [House of Delegates], District 6, Timothy Knepp; **Frederick County** [State Senate] District 3, Alex S. Mooney; **Montgomery County** [State's Attorney] Douglas Gansler; [County Council] at Large, Blair Ewing, Isiah Leggett, District 4 William Patton, [Democratic Central Committee], Alvin Rivera; [House of Delegates] District 19, Barney Evans, District 20, James Harrison, District 39, Patricia Cummings; **Prince George's County** [County Council] District 8, Zalee Harris, [House of Delegates], District 21, Frances Sheltenberger, District 23, Shukoor Ahmed.

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Book Review

New Introduction for Montessori Classic

Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work
by E.M. Standing, Publ. Plume, 1998 ed.

The 1998 edition of the Montessori classic, *Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work* (E.M. Standing) includes a new introduction by **Lee Havis**. This introduction helps to clarify the underlying significance of Montessori principles, and provides an historical summary of the growth of the Montessori community since the time of the book's original publication in 1957. It also includes a description of the Society's approach to Montessori education and the formation of the IMAC accrediting agency in 1994.

Havis focuses his attention particularly on the underlying Montessori principles that Standing brought to light in his original 1957 text — perhaps the most "enduring legacy" of Dr. Montessori's contribution to the world. Havis also challenges readers to let this comprehensive biography of Dr. Montessori open up a deeper questioning of 'what is Montessori?' — to explore this question through the reader's own life and experience along a "new path in education committed to the emergence of the normalized child."

Havis also urges the reader to see the long-term nature and commitment of Montessori's work — to view the coming new thousand year period as the "millennium of the child". He states that "this publication is much more than a biography of Dr. Montessori, written by a close associate. It opens the reader to the timeless principles of nature which are vital to our own current research and work for her vision of a 'new education' in the world."

The 1998 revision also includes an updated appendix of the latest Montessori resources, books and organizations. Havis believes that this more current information will considerably enhance the practical value of this publication as a useful tool for the reader's further research and study in the field.

Order the 1998 edition of *Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work* from IMS. Price is \$13.95, plus \$1.50 postage and handling. Send order and payment to: IMS, 912 Thayer Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20910.

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The Montessori



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To Give Work

"...the ancient philosophical conception of evil resolves itself partially into so many social questions and actions...to give work...contributes largely to morality by removing so many causes of evil."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Spontaneous Act. in Ed.*, p.321

Montessori teaching gives young children work to stimulate their natural interests and needs for intellectual activity — to practice and develop their mental faculties in the unconscious formation of basic character. The elementary child will later more consciously seek to learn about such abstract moral concepts as duty, honor, loyalty and integrity — and these too can become deeply integrated into the child's whole way of being for life. Morality therefore begins to form within the child as a natural process of meeting important intellectual needs for learning in the environment.

Intellectual Needs

"To respond to the intellectual needs of man...is to make an important contribution to morality"

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Spontaneous Act. in Ed.*, p.323

The young child develops the basic values of polite society by sharing materials and engaging in various forms of practical life learning with others. Even the child's own solitary concentrated activity with physical objects is leading to a social pattern of peaceful harmony with others — creating within the child a sense of basic mental order, emotional calm and persistence to work. The perfection of this "normalization" process in the child requires a corresponding type of perfection in the supervising adult as well.

Perfection

"The teacher who sets out with the idea that she is perfect...is not a good teacher...If we seek perfection, we must pay attention to our defects...We have to face them in the full light of day and recognize their existence as something unavoidable throughout life."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Absorbent Mind*, p.246-47

While the child is perfecting its morality through work, the Montessori teacher must likewise perfect her own being in the environment — to remove those detrimental influences around the child that can so persistently work against the child's true normalization. The teacher's perfection must particularly aim to discover and resolve the many unknown errors of her own "personality" — to restrain and re-direct whatever negative thoughts or actions there may be to abandon or repress the child's true nature. Being committed to Montessori principles directs us to view the good in ourselves and others as progress towards the central vision of the *normalized* child.

The Good

"'the good' are those who 'move towards the good.'"

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Discovery of the Child*, p.30

Good Montessori teaching is not a fixed state of compliance with rigid moral rules, but rather a committed path of growth which is guided by universal laws of nature. The Montessori principle "observation" directs us to see the signs of good, positive behavior in the child, such as concentration to work, while we carefully engage and resolve the various detrimental influences that persist in its surrounding environment. Such a committed way of being with children can

reveal many new ideas that have a wide application to the larger questions of morality in society.

New Ideas

"Morality must give us new ideas about good and evil, and the responsibilities towards humanity that individuals incur when they assume power so much greater than those with which they were naturally endowed."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *From Child, to Adolescence*, p.118

Montessori teaching can set in motion many powerful new ideas in the world — creating a "new education" to profoundly transform our whole sense of reality and possibility for the future of mankind. This *new education* offers hope and direction for the emergence of a higher level of morality than has ever before been evident in human history. This *new morality* of the *normalized* child is based not on technical compliance with written laws and ethical codes, but rather on the transcendent truth and insuperable power of eternal and infinite laws of nature.



Public Assembly

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The Assembly is now engaged in providing public information about its endorsements to local news media — to inform voters before the elections to be held in September and November.

For more information about the Assembly, contact: Lee Havis, Chairperson, MPA, #205, Silver Spring, MD 20910