



# The Montessori OBSERVER

STRENGTH

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Children working with practical life activities at the Windsor Montessori School (Windsor, Connecticut)

## Montessori School in Windsor, Connecticut

The Windsor Montessori School was established in 1986 by the Town of Windsor as a community resource for all its residents. It is located in facilities known as the Milo W. Peck Child Development Center which provides a variety of community services for the Town. The property includes an outdoor recreational area of 44 semi-wooded acres and nature trails.

Directed by Anne Wakelin, the Windsor school contains three separate Montessori classrooms which serve an enrollment of over 60 children from age 18 months to 6 years. Half and full-day schedules are provided as well as special programs for music, movement, French, Spanish and computer education. In the summer, a special camp program entitled "A Taste of Montessori" is offered. This summer program makes good use of the ample outdoor space for nature walks and movement exercises.

In April, 1998, Allison McLeod, a member of the Windsor teaching staff, enrolled in the IMS Montessori teacher education program. She is presently completing her preparation in this correspondence course for certification as a Montessori teacher with children aged 2-6. Ms. McLeod holds a BS degree in Education from the University of Maine

(1972) and has been serving as a teacher of young children since 1984. She has been employed on the staff of Windsor Montessori School since 1989.

For further information, contact: Anne Wakelin, Director, Windsor Montessori School, 114 Palisado Ave., Windsor, CT 06095, Tel. (860) 285-1420.

## Reception for Public Interest Candidates

On January 27, 1999, the Maryland Public Assembly (MPA) held a reception to honor its endorsed candidates in the fall, 1998 elections. A public interest citizen organization, the MPA applies such Montessori principles as "individual liberty" to the field of politics in the state of Maryland, USA.

Attending the reception were endorsed candidates and members and friends of the Assembly from throughout the state. Assembly endorsed Isiah Leggett and Blair Ewing, were present to report their experiences in the elections and activities thereafter as elected members of the local county council. Other endorsed candidates attended also, reflecting a broad background of campaign experience and effort during the 1998 elections.

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## Fair Treatment Sought for IMAC Accreditation

On December 9, 1998, Lee Havis appeared before an advisory committee of the U.S. Department of Education — to testify for greater fairness in the federal recognition of accreditation of Montessori teacher education. This hearing was held in Washington, DC, as part of the federal government's oversight and review of accrediting agencies it recognizes to

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## MONTESSORI CONFERENCES

Creating the New Education  
Inner Preparation for Montessori teaching

Montreal, Canada  
April 17-18, 1999

Louisville, Kentucky  
May 22-23, 1999

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
July 17-18, 1999

Singapore  
July 24-25, 1999

Austin, Texas  
Sept. 11-12, 1999

Register 8 weeks before conference  
date for maximum discount  
\$130/member \$170/regular

The Society's two-day weekend conference employs group discussion, demonstrations, and analysis to illustrate Montessori teaching skills. Lee Havis, IMS executive director, leads the discussion committed to Montessori principles.

For full cost and registration details, contact: IMS, 912 Thayer Ave., #207, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Tel. (301) 589-1127.

# STRENGTH

by Lee Havis

*"The strength of even the smallest children is more than we might imagine, but it must have a free play in order to reveal itself...when children...come into contact with nature, they reveal their strength."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Discovery of the Child*, p.69

Although the child is born with the ultimate strength and power of universal laws of nature, its outward expression is nonetheless critically dependent on certain experiences that can only take place during the formative period of early childhood. These experiences will determine the child's essential way of being for life — and the extent to which such inborn normal qualities as attachment to reality, spontaneous self-discipline and order will be fully expressed in the individual. So, if parents and teachers impose a negative, repressive environment on the young child, it will not develop normally, and evolve instead a superficial personality with strong defenses against any positive interaction with others.

## Strong Defenses

*"An adult environment is not a suitable environment for children, but rather an aggregate of obstacles that strengthen their defenses, warp their attitudes, and expose them to adult suggestion."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.109

Ordinary education tends to repress and control the child's natural instincts for order and harmony — building up instead a defensive, reactive pattern towards the entire environment. The child is then considerably limited in its strength of character, mind and body — a victim of the many surrounding detrimental influences of others. The traditional early childhood experience therefore results in a very weak individual who lacks the self-confidence and independent judgment that is so vitally needed for successful daily living in society.

## A Weak Individual

*"The child who is not properly cared for takes vengeance on society by forming a weak individual, an obstacle to the progress of civilization"*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Ed. for a New World*, p.32

A weak individual does not persist in work and tends to avoid any personal responsibility for action and being with others. From childhood, this weakness can become firmly fixed in the adult's whole personality — the logical consequence of a traditional education with its

characteristic teacher-centered curriculum, grading system, group instruction, rewards and punishment. Within such a repressive learning environment, the child has no rights or freedom to develop its inherent normal strength in harmony with the fundamental laws of nature.

## Rights

*"...what rights has he who comes among us without strength and without thought? ..we recognize the rights of adults — a civilization based on the rights of the strongest."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Spontaneous Act. in Ed.*, p.12-16

Parents and teachers tend to control and manipulate children according to rights that have been well established over centuries of human civilization. The countervailing natural rights of the child have been largely overlooked, and only recently have they been considered as part of a possible alternative approach to traditional education. The human spirit is therefore ordinarily locked into a fierce battle against the arbitrary authority of others — a fundamental conflict between the purpose of nature and the surrounding forces of a repressive adult society.

## The Fierce Battle

*"In the fierce battle which social life has become, man needs a strong character...He needs...to be endowed with practical capabilities to face up to the difficulties of life."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *From Childhood to Adolescence*, p.61

The child naturally seeks to express its strength in the face of many opposing forces — a fight for life which continues with adults in its various forms of struggle for gain and advantage over others. This fierce battle is evident in such outer forms as war and criminality, but it also exists in many hidden, less violent forms of competition, commerce and politics. The essential will-power needed for success in these daily life struggles, however, is too often lacking in adults who were denied the proper opportunities for self-expression and normal development during the critical early childhood years.

## Will-power

*"That which gives strength to resist is not the moral vision, it is the exercise of will-power."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Spontaneous Act. in Ed.*, p.182-83

Will-power can develop normally only before the age of about six when the child

is forming itself through various experiences of choice and decision-making in the environment. Montessori education therefore seeks to support this normal development by offering many opportunities for the child to work with materials according to its own self-directed needs and interests of the moment. The child is then able to form within itself a strong character to withstand and overcome the many formidable trials and difficulties that will invariably arise in later adult life.

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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.

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**ADVERTISING**  
Advertising space is available for services and products relating to Montessori education. Market-place 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.

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## Moment of Peril

### Communicating with Parents

from *Observer*, November/1989

by Lee Havis

When parents interact with the teacher during her supervision of children (see *Observer*, November/1989), the potential detrimental influence of the "adult personality" is implicated. Parents as obstacles to one's being a 'commitment to Montessori principles' are seen here as projections of one's own "personality."

To "control" the detrimental imposition of "personality" as it arises in the "moment of peril" with parents (as with any other adults in the environment), is primarily a matter of expansive communication—to listen and respond in words in a manner to clarify one's position and responsibility as a "commitment to Montessori principles."

When there is some continuing serious misbehavior with children at the "moment of peril," one's primary attention must be directed to a careful observation of the children. Therefore, a brief word to the parent; e.g., "just a moment, I must watch the children now to resolve this matter" might be most appropriate. In this case, the teacher would elaborate in more detail about her handling of the specific situation at a later time—to respond to the parent's particular questions or concerns about the approach of "control the environment, not the child."

In the present situation, the "misbehavior" of one child spitting in the face of another child does not appear to unduly threaten any serious physical harm to the child involved—so that we have primarily a detrimental influence of "adult personality" in the form of the parent's impatience and embarrassment. A brief word of explanation at this "moment of peril" would therefore seem most useful to help the parent appreciate the importance of patience and observation in this situation—to allow the children to work out their problem themselves without adult interference. The parent can thereby come to understand how Montessori principles are applied to help the children develop true independence and normal social harmony with others.

### Kicking the Teacher

Three year old Eric has grabbed several objects off the shelf and has carelessly dropped them to the floor. As Eric reaches for another object, the teacher places a firm hand on the new object, whereupon Eric begins to pull very hard to obtain possession. The teacher does not let go. After a brief period of pulling, Eric looks up at the teacher and shouts angrily 'let me have it!' As the teacher continues to maintain a firm hand on the object, Eric proceeds to hit, spit and kick the teacher. What to do?

Answer in *Observer*, January/1990.

## Relationship

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### Order

"... order ... is a kind of inner sense that distinguishes the relationships between various objects rather than the objects themselves."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 55

Order builds itself up within the child as one object in the environment is related to another through the child's active sensory exploration and experience. The young child thereby "absorbs" its external order which then becomes an intimate aspect of its entire fundamental personality formation during early childhood. Normal development of the young child's whole being is therefore critically determined by the nature of its relationship with the environment.

### Child and Environment

"In this sensitive relationship between a child and his surroundings may be found the means for untangling the raveled skein of mystery that surrounds the spiritual growth of a child in all its wonders."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 42

The young child develops normally in life as its relationship with the environment is supported by the adult's being as a commitment to the three Montessori principles. "Misbehavior" and "disorder" exist in children only as a reflection of a corresponding detrimental influence in the environment for which the adult must necessarily assume responsibility in its identification and correction. By such "preparation of the environment", the adult thereby allows all misbehavior to eventually disappear as the child returns to its own true normal being of spontaneous self-discipline, independence and complete harmony with its entire environment. The new "normalized" child then emerges with a real spirit of harmony and cooperation for others in all its various social relations.

### Relations

"It is difficult to make social relations real if one uses only the imagination; practical experience is necessary. One cannot awaken the conscience by talking about it."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *From Childhood to Adolescence*, p. 27

Normal social relations emerge in the world as children freely engage in the process of solving their various practical problems with each other in a group situation. Given the principle of "individual liberty" which is necessarily limited by a defined physical space and a specific number of objects, children must practice such vital social skills as "patience" and "sharing". Children thereby tend to find their own peaceful solutions for various social problems—without the ordinary interference of a controlling adult presence. The "normalized" children that emerge from the Montessori environment show a form of true natural justice

*Montessori Observer*, January, 1990

which is ordinarily quite lacking in practice in ordinary adult society.

### Justice

"... the concept of justice is born, simultaneously with the understanding of the relationship between one's acts and the needs of others."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Childhood to Adolescence*, p. 12

As children adapt their actions to the needs of others in the Montessori environment, normal social relationships come to reflect the quality of true justice as intended by the natural order of the universe. The "normalized" child will happily adjust its own individual functioning and development to the needs and interests of the total group—responding naturally to the changing requirements for a complete harmony throughout the entire environment. As these "normalized" children become adults, a relation in sympathy for one another becomes even more accepted as the true basis of all social interaction in the world.

### Relation in Sympathy

"The true relation between man and man, though they be initiated by means of the senses, are established in sympathy."

Dr. Maria Montessori

from *Spontaneous Act*, in Ed., p. 325

Built on sympathy with others, normal human relationships develop as a natural process of evolving life which is intimately incorporated into the inherent order of the universe as expressed through one's commitment to the three Montessori principles. From the moment of birth, the infant's instincts for survival and physical comfort compel a basic relationship with its mother. Thereafter, this fundamental mother-child relationship extends itself sensorially in the environment and to others to ultimately envision a complete conscious awareness of one's being in life on behalf of the progress of all mankind. Montessori teaching therefore vitally serves to realize man's true normal relationship of complete harmony and being with all life in the universe.

## Ten Years of Progress

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**August, 1988:** Society's Montessori teacher education certification recognized in state of Texas as "Administrator's credential".

**June, 1989:** Lee Havis conducts first Montessori conference in Great Britain.

**September, 1989:** New fee structure to favor "active participation" by recognized Montessori schools.

The Society plans to continue its support for the "new education" in the future along a broad front of challenging problems, interests and needs as reflected by the over 600 Society members throughout the world. Increased efforts will be particularly directed to the practical problems of starting and operating Montessori schools.

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## OBSERVER

The Montessori



## STRENGTH

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Such Montessori ideas as the *normalized* child and the *prepared environment* can easily lose their strength as they are adapted to conform to the deeply entrenched patterns of prejudice and limitation in society. Too often, the widespread usage of such terms has led to a considerable weakening and distortion of their meaning as they become caught up and confused with various traditional ways of thinking about the child and education. We must therefore constantly strengthen our commitment to the expansive vision of the *normalized* child through ever deeper self-examination, study and inner preparation — to keep expanding this inner vision towards its ultimate promise of a stronger and better humanity in the future.

### Stronger Humanity

*"It is not enough to ensure for the child food, clothing and shelter...on the satisfaction of his more spiritual needs the progress of humanity depends — the creation indeed of a stronger and better humanity."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
from *To Ed. the Hum. Potential*, p.120

Applying Montessori principles with children will certainly lead us along a new and favorable path for the transformation of humanity. However, our progress in this work cannot be measured by such superficial facts as its external appearance or agreement with others. Rather, the true strength of our efforts lies entirely within ourselves — a transcendent power to realize the true *normalized* child with the necessary strength to overcome the many obstacles in society which oppose the complete harmony, order and peace of mankind.

### Society Accepts Payments by Credit Card

The Society is now qualified to accept Visa/Master card payments for its various services and products. Payments can therefore now be made by phone, fax, mail or internet correspondence.

Lee Havis, IMS executive director, believes that this new credit card payment system will particularly ease the burden of its international correspondents who must otherwise pay with foreign currency or make inconvenient and costly exchange arrangements. He also stated that payment through credit card helps to resolve the difficult and uncertain nature of mail payments and check writing procedures which would otherwise deter participation in many situations.

## Reception

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Lee Havis, MPA chairperson, noted the reception as an important opportunity to focus the Assembly for its future actions to support voting for the public interest. He stated that "the reception showed the need to work together with others in the electoral process. I believe the Assembly can serve to focus this work for successful public interest campaign efforts in the future."

Havis indicated also his plans for MPA to sponsor workshops to help future candidates identify more successful campaign issues and strategies, and to compile and disseminate this type of data to all interested parties. For more information about the *Maryland Public Assembly*, contact Lee Havis, tel. (301) 589-0733.

## IMAC Testifies

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qualify institutions to receive federal funding through such means as student loans and grants.

As chairperson of the *International Montessori Accreditation Council* (IMAC), Havis urged the panel to withdraw the recognition of another accrediting agency in the field of Montessori teacher education as lacking in reliability and compliance with federal recognition criteria. He particularly emphasized the unfair and prejudicial nature of this situation to IMAC — creating a potentially negative perception of the quality and reliability of IMAC accreditation in the general public.

Havis also noted the other agency's lack of proper purpose to receive federal funds. After considerable discussion of these points, the advisory committee voted to require the other accrediting agency to demonstrate full compliance with the Department's recognition criteria by Dec. 9, 1999.

Havis indicated that the IMAC agency will continue to monitor the progress of this compliance, and work to resolve the long-term issues of governmental bias and unfair interference in accreditation of Montessori teacher education. The committee will next take up this matter at hearings in 1999.

On February 2, 1999, IMAC submitted further written comments to the Department of Education, to substantiate and update the testimony presented at the December hearings. For copy of IMAC written testimony and other information about IMAC accreditation standards and procedures, contact Lee Havis, tel. (301) 589-1127.