



# The Montessori OBSERVER

LAWS

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## Donald E. Seymour Joins IMS Advisory Board

The IMS Advisory Board will now include the participation of **Donald E. Seymour**, former business executive, inventor and author of *"The Key to Your Unknown Talent"*. Mr. Seymour joins Elizabeth Hainstock, Dr. Orin Cornett, and John Bradshaw on this board which seeks to expand association of IMS and Montessori education with other related fields in society.

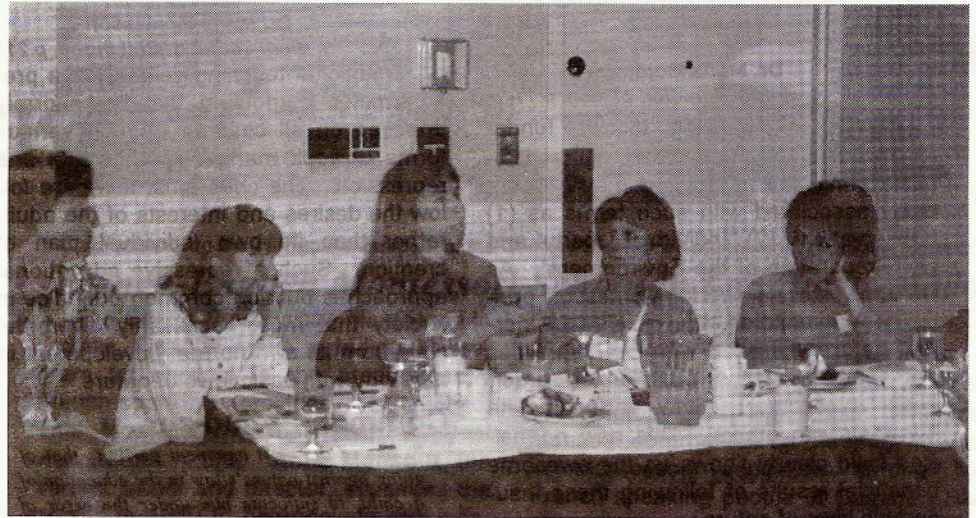
During his long and prominent business career, Mr. Seymour started numerous successful companies and has supported many civic and business organizations, including the *Wisconsin Small Business Association*, which he founded. In 1987, Mr. Seymour set up and funded the *Vocational Guidance institute*, to research healthful careers, learning and talent. The holder of three chemical patents, Mr. Seymour has lectured extensively on building companies, life planning and natural talent capabilities.

In retirement, he continues to research talent discovery and the field of career guidance. In 1996, he published *"The Key to Your Unknown Talent"*, introducing the new science of Talent Discovery. He references Dr. Montessori's work in this book, and plans to expand this relationship in his future publications.

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Donald E. Seymour, new member of  
IMS Advisory Board



*Proceedings of IMS Montessori conference in Washington, DC — November 6-7, 1999*

## Creating the New Education in Washington, DC

On November 6-7, 1999, the Society conducted its latest *"Creating the New Education"* conference in the Washington, DC area. Participating were teachers, parents and other educators from Maryland, Washington, DC, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Texas, New Hampshire and Canada.

As always, this two-day weekend experience provided inner preparation for Montessori teaching — to show how to effectively "control the environment, not the child" to assure the emergence of the child's true "normalized" nature. **Lee Havis**, IMS executive director, led the group discussion, using various examples, role-play drama scenarios, observation exercises and analysis of common problem situations with children. He stated that "the role play acting out is particularly helpful to visualize our unknown errors, and to see how to make the necessary corrections."

The discussion focused particular attention on controlling the adult personality in circumstances of fantasy and in giving lesson presentations of materials to children. Havis offered certain "rules of thumb" to help the participants work out and resolve the various personality issues of dependency, negativity and abandonment that tend to persist in the adult's ordinary relationship with children.

Havis also used specific Montessori materials to demonstrate the basic procedures in giving an initial lesson presentation. Emphasizing the very brief and simple nature of such lessons, he said that "a traditional full detail presentation would tend to bring too much attention to the adult personality. It would distract the child's attention away from the materials themselves and might also lead the child to lose interest in the materials altogether. Also, it would discourage the child's natural interest to freely explore and experiment with the materials as is most desirable for normal development."

Havis indicated that the Society will schedule further *"Creating the New Education"* conferences based on local interest. He invited interested persons to contact the Society directly to express their interest, and to suggest any preference for a specific date and location.

### LESSON PRESENTATIONS

*"The instruction of the teacher consists then merely in a hint, a touch — enough to give a start to the child. The rest develops of itself."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Dr. Montessori's*  
*Own Handbook, p.58-59*



**by Lee Havis**

*"...the problems of education must be solved on the basis of the laws of cosmic order...Only when we hold to these can we judge and modify the multitude of human laws which deal with the passing moments of external social construction..."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Formation of Man*, p.11-14

Montessori teaching follows fundamental laws of nature with children — basic principles of life that may be generally associated with such terms as (1) "Observation", (2) "Individual Liberty" and (3) "Preparation of the Environment". As we apply these powerful Montessori principles with children, the child's true normal nature will arise with such qualities as spontaneous self-discipline, order, eager intellectual activity and complete harmony with others. This new *normalized* child clearly shows us the awesome beneficial results of following these insuperable laws of nature.

**Insuperable Laws**

*"Life increases, becomes manifest, and perfects the individual, but it is confined within certain limits and is governed by insuperable laws."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Discovery of the Child*, p.61-62

Laws of nature direct all life to evolve the cosmos as a total interrelated functioning of the whole. However, since we can only apply such insuperable laws as "observation" with a very limited understanding, we must constantly enlarge their meaning in a process of inner preparation and study. Ordinary education, however, does not engage in this type of inner preparation, but follows instead a superficial human logic directed to only the most conventional beliefs and prejudices about the child in society.

**Human Logic**

*"...the pedagogic world is guided by human logic, but nature has other laws."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Ed. for a New World*, p.53

Conventional education views the child as being essentially weak, fanciful and unguided from within. Therefore, teaching tends to apply a human logic that seeks only to achieve the child's obedience and dependence on external adult authority. The child must accordingly divert from its own self-directed path of learning through natural laws — to comply instead with whatever may be the desires and interests of the controlling adult personality.

**Adult Desires and Interests**

*"The end of education was to subject the child to an adult, who substituted himself for nature and replaced the laws of life with his own desires and interests."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.212

Traditional teaching centers on a pre-determined curriculum that is uniformly imposed on all children through various forms of adult manipulation, control and repression. The child must therefore follow the desires and interests of the adult, rather than its own individual plan of creation. Such a repressive educational approach is built on common prejudice in society that must necessarily divert the child from its own normal development in harmony with basic laws of nature.

**Common Prejudice**

*"...one of the most imminent perils is that of going against nature's law in the education of a child, to suffocate him under the error of common prejudice."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Formation of Man*, p.66

Common prejudice leads the teacher to consider as insignificant or non-existent the child's own true needs and interests for self-directed learning — requiring the child instead to follow whatever may be the adult's own program of specific curriculum and subject matter for the child. Traditional teaching then aims to control and correct the learning process through such means as grades, tests and group instruction. Many teachers also set up irrational classroom rules to attempt to teach morality, character and goodness — to coerce children to fit within a uniform system of presumed fairness for the common good of all.

**Irrational Rules**

*"...the kind of education still in vogue condemns the teacher to be a dictator...teachers of the older school hold firmly to irrational rules and have little to guide them but illusion and prejudice."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.256

Rules for young children set up a very irrational type of justice that the teacher must necessarily enforce and interpret according to her own particular views and opinions. Since the young child's mind is not yet capable of mature reasoning on its own, such rules impose a detrimental influence of the adult personality. By contrast, Montessori education has a lack of rules, which offers instead a more fundamental form of justice according to a commitment to basic laws of nature.

**Lack of Rules**

*"Lack of ...rules furnished a basic nothing, and because of that nothingness, the soul was able to expand."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Ed. for a New World*, p. 55

Montessori teaching replaces the customary classroom rules with a commitment to such fundamental principles as "individual liberty". However, this lack of rules does not mean that children are abandoned without the necessary modeling of the adult in matters of proper grace and courtesy. Indeed, the principle of "preparation of the environment" is one of the laws of nature that Montessori teachers follow to engage with the child in

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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

### Multiple Scenarios

The new Montessori teacher here is faced with multiple scenarios of misbehavior around the room (see *Observer*, September 1999). She is frustrated and distracted by so much noise and confusion, that she doesn't know how or where to begin to apply the approach of "control the environment, not the child".

The teacher in this *moment of peril* must begin her analysis with a consideration of what is most critical to resolve first for the well-being of the total environment — an important rule of thumb that allows the teacher to proceed thereafter with greater calm, certainty and focused application of Montessori principles. Following this rule of thumb, she must judge which scenario is of greatest potential detriment to the well being of all; i.e., from the extreme danger of violent physical harm to a child to the relatively low priority issue of quiet fantasy.

Once this initial judgment is made, a further rule of thumb can be applied — to intervene to the least extent possible to achieve a satisfactory result. This means to use "eye contact" alone as a first choice, if possible, and only in extreme situations to use physical means such as touching a child or some specific object in the environment.

As the most disruptive scenarios are resolved in the room, the teacher can then turn her attention to those that are less troublesome — to ultimately resolve even the relatively minor misbehavior issues associated with quiet fantasy. In this way, the entire classroom will gradually return to a calm and peaceful state of order and harmony, as the children respond in a more normalized manner with the environment.

### Lesson Presentation Procedures

The teacher has noticed that children in her class seem only briefly interested in working on materials on their own — and are constantly asking for help from her in a very dependent manner. However, when she begins to show the full detailed presentation of a particular piece of equipment, the children often look away and seem to lack interest to follow up the work with concentration on their own. The teacher therefore wonders what mistake she may be making with her lesson presentation procedures. *What to do?*

Answer in *Observer*, March, 2000



Children working in a bi-lingual classroom of the Centre Prescolaire Montessori in LaSalle, Canada  
**French-English Montessori School in LaSalle, Canada**

The Centre Prescolaire Montessori in LaSalle, Canada offers a bi-lingual program for children in the predominantly French-speaking province of Quebec. This Montessori school near Montreal was started in 1960. Anne Mansour, the current owner and director, expanded the school in 1980 to now include two locations, with a total enrollment of about 175 children from ages 2-6.

The main school campus has a specially designed building with mezzanine level central office that has viewing windows into each surrounding classroom. When Lee Havis, IMS director, visited the school in April 1999, he noted the building's particular suitability for operating a Montessori educational program.

The school's bi-lingual feature is implemented by having both English and French speaking teachers in each classroom. The children are therefore introduced to both languages in the natural flow of interaction between children and teachers throughout the day. Each room has separate French and English language materials, so that the children may choose and learn according to their own particular needs and interests of the moment. Ms. Mansour says that this approach works well for the children who

normally acquire both languages without undue difficulty or confusion.

While attending the IMS conference in Washington, DC in November 1999, Ms. Mansour commented on the great interest in Montessori education among the French speaking people of Canada. She also expressed the need for more effective Montessori teacher education in the French language — offering her support to cooperate with these efforts in the future.

For further information, contact: Anne Mansour, Centre Prescolaire Montessori, 1505 Serre, LaSalle, Quebec H8N 1N3, Canada. Tel. (514) 363-6603.

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many positive ways — to give lessons and otherwise support the child's many needs and interests for goal-directed activity in the environment.

### Laws of Nature

*"Education must be reconstructed and based on the laws of nature and not on the preconceived notions and prejudices of adult society."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
 from *Formation of Man*, p.97

Montessori teaching follows laws of nature that require many exacting forms of adult behavior and procedures with children; e.g., to remove any detrimental influences from around the child in question. We must particularly work to control the detrimental influence of the adult personality in the child's environment — to check our ordinary tendencies to interrupt, manipulate or repress the child under the guise of "help" or "teaching". In this way, Montessori teaching allows the

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## Positions & Placements

Teacher sought by Montessori elementary school in Sunnyvale, CA. Must have Bachelor's degree and some teaching experience and Montessori training. Respond to: HR Dept., Rainbow Montessori, 790 E. Duane Ave., Sunnyvale, CA 94086

Address correction requested

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## OBSERVER

The Montessori



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young child to express a form of love for its environment that is evident in many forms of concentrated activity with physical objects.

#### Form of Love

*"Every work which is done according to the laws of nature...attains consciousness under a form of love."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.103

The young child expresses a deep form of love toward its environment — a strong desire and interest to explore and interact with the environment in a concentrated, orderly manner. The young child is naturally eager to learn, and is therefore attracted to intellectual activity that will build up its entire essential personality for life. As adults, we can only observe the outward effects of the child's instinctive love for work — a self-creative process that comes from mysterious guiding principles within the child itself.

#### Mysterious Guiding Principles

*"...a new being...contains within itself mysterious guiding principles which will be the source of its work, character and adaptation to its surroundings."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.19

The child follows mysterious guiding principles to engage in many types of constructive self-directed activity in the environment. The child seeks to intimately adapt to its surroundings with a natural quality of harmony, joy and order with others. The emergence of this new *normalized* child is the beginning of a whole new world full of miracles that promises to establish fundamental laws of nature as the basis for a new and better society.

#### World Full of Miracles

*"...laws and treaties are not enough. What we need is a world full of miracles...A new world for a new man."*

**Dr. Maria Montessori**  
from *Peace and Education*, p.44

While we must certainly deal with the existing laws of our present social order, our first and overriding concern is better directed to discover and use the fundamental laws of nature with children. Then we can begin to see the reality of Dr. Montessori's vision of a *new education* — the hope for a new world full of the many miracles of the *normalized* child. We are creating this *new education* each day as we follow and apply infinite and eternal laws of nature with children.

#### DONALD E. SEYMOUR

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Lee Havis, IMS executive director, stated that "Mr. Seymour is a valuable addition to our board. His work in talent discovery is closely related to Montessori education, and I hope this relationship will expand even further through his closer participation on the IMS advisory board.

Mr. Seymour resides in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. A copy of his book *"The Key to Your Unknown Talent"* and other information about his work may be obtained by direct contact to: Talent Discovery Press, 3900 West Brown Deer Rd., Suite #A-110, Milwaukee, WI 53217, Tel. 414-228-1266.



Child in foreground is working with cards and counters of the Montessori math materials. In background is pink tower work. Centre Prescolaire Montessori (LaSalle, Canada)