



The Montessori *Help* OBSERVER

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Participants engaging in Observation exercise at the "Creating the New Education" conference in Tampa, Florida — February 26-27, 2000

Montessori Conference in Tampa, Florida

On February 26-27, 2000, IMS conducted its latest 'Creating the New Education' conference in Tampa Florida. Participating were parents and teachers from throughout the state of Florida. In addition, **Marioara Popescu**, from Romania and **Alexandra Dorado** from the Philippines were also in attendance.

As always, **Lee Havis**, IMS executive director, directed this two-day weekend experience of inner preparation to help participants learn and improve Montessori teaching skills. The conference included a combination of discussion, illustrations, demonstrations, role-play drama and analysis of various scenarios to show how to 'control the environment, not the child' in many common problem situations with children.

The conference discussion particularly focused attention on the difficult and delicate problem of controlling the "adult personality" in the child's environment; e.g., showing how we can change our ordinary negative, thoughtless language of blame, control and criticism to a more positive-connected manner of speech.

Havis stated that "our bi-polar personality of negativity or abandonment is deeply engrained and built into ordinary society. We therefore need to practice very specific language to disengage from

these common detrimental tendencies. For example, "come over here, I have something to show you" This phrase is an effective alternative to the ordinary thoughtless remark that draws attention to the child's mistake. Negative statements make it more difficult to create and maintain the trust and harmony that is so necessary in the adult-child relationship".

Havis also emphasized the vital importance of "eye contact" to overcome the tendency to abandon a child. He stated that "eye contact that is freely given by the child is a definite signal of interest and need for the adult's presence. Sometimes just looking back without a word is all that is needed to help a child recover its poise and continue ahead towards more independent and self-directed behavior."

After the conference, Havis visited several area schools with Ms. Popescu, to help acquaint her with some of the practical classroom applications of Montessori education in the United States. Havis noted that "as inspector general for the Romanian Ministry of Education, Ms. Popescu has a considerable responsibility to help improve the conditions of education in her country. I believe her experience at the conference will contribute to her efforts in many positive ways."

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IMS offers French Montessori Workshop

In June 2000, the Society will offer a special 12-day French Montessori workshop in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. This workshop will provide a basic introduction to Montessori teaching skills, and is open all French speaking people throughout the world.

Lee Havis, IMS executive director, will direct the workshop in English, with

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MONTESSORI SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

*Learn Montessori Teaching Skills
Inner Preparation for Montessori teaching*

Brisbane, Australia
May 13-14, 2000

Montreal, Canada
French Montessori Workshop
June 1-12, 2000

Mesa, AZ
July 15-16, 2000

Santa Barbara, CA
July 22-23, 2000

Columbia, SC
September 16-17, 2000

Washington, DC
November 4-5, 2000

Register 8 weeks before event date for maximum discount. Conference rate (8 weeks in advance) is:
\$130/member \$170/regular

The Society's two-day weekend conference employs group discussion and dynamic experiential learning, led by Lee Haves, IMS executive director. The French Montessori Workshop is at separate rate, and includes conferences, meetings and classroom visits.

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



by Lee Havis

"To help life, this is the first and fundamental principle."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Formation of Man*, p.16

Dr. Montessori referred to her new education as a "help to life" — a way of being with children that allows their true nature to fully emerge with such normal qualities as spontaneous self-discipline, order and complete harmony with their total environment. Montessori teaching helps support the emergence of this "normalized" child by creating an environment committed to such natural laws as (1) "Observation"; (2) "Individual Liberty", and (3) "Preparation of the Environment". These three fundamental Montessori principles guide the adult in serving the child's natural spirit to help itself in the essential learning of life.

Serving the Spirit

"We do not serve the child's body... he should not be served in this sense... We have to help the child to act, will and think for himself... This is the art of serving the spirit."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.281

The Montessori environment serves the child's inner spiritual needs and instincts for self-directed learning through work — spontaneous activity that is directed by a mysterious "teacher within". Guided by such principles as "individual liberty", the Montessori teacher allows the child to freely explore the environment according to its own particular needs and interests of the moment. The child can thereby express its vital instinct for independent learning through a variety of materials and exercises that are provided for this purpose in the environment.

Child's First Instinct

"The child's first instinct is to carry out his actions by himself, without anyone helping him."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.90-91

The young child instinctively seeks to act for itself — to choose its own activity in an independent and self-directed manner. From infancy, the child's first instinct is to master its environment — to exert its own efforts to overcome the various problems and issues that arise in the process of ordinary daily living with others. The Montessori teacher supports this instinct towards independence by providing a variety of simple, concrete things for the child to do on its own.

Simple Things

"A child has need of simple things, and complicated objects are frequently more a hindrance than a help to his development."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.74

Simple things like cleaning, polishing, folding, spooning, etc. can powerfully stimulate the child's natural desire to explore the environment and concentrate on goal-directed activity. With the help of its unique "absorbent mind", the young child incorporates these experiences into its entire mental framework and personality for life. The child's delicate sense of touch is therefore a vital help in forming the child's essential being during the critical period of early childhood.

Sense of Touch

"I realized that the sense of touch must be a great help to children who had not yet fully developed."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Ed. For a New World*, p. 5

The young child learns to recognize the essential attributes of physical reality through its senses — primarily by handling objects that reflect the order and harmony of nature. Through its sense of touch, the young child comes to appreciate such natural attributes as order, sequence, size, shape and texture. Adults must therefore be especially well trained to prepare and present those physical objects that best attract the child's interest in concentrated intellectual activity.

Trained Adults

"It is therefore not enough to prepare objects for children adapted in size and shape for their needs: adults must also be trained to help them."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.198

Montessori teachers must be carefully trained to give simple, clear and brief lessons with well-ordered apparatus — to help children learn how to use these self-instructional tools on their own. Such lesson presentations must focus on the materials themselves; i.e., not on the adult's personality that is necessarily somewhat involved in the process. In this way, children look to the physical objects for their learning — a very different instructional approach from that of the ordinary good teacher in conventional education.

A Good Teacher

"In America... a good teacher meant only one who had studied all the things that do not help the child, and was full of ideas which were opposed to the child's freedom."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Ed. for a New World*, p. 52

In America, as elsewhere, a good teacher is usually trained to directly control the child's learning through her lecture and example — a focus of attention on her position of wisdom, knowledge and authority. By contrast, Montessori teaching helps children act for themselves — to follow their own interests and needs in handling objects according to inner instincts for self-directed development. Montessori teachers must therefore abstain from offering such useless assistance as would lead the child away from its own independent learning in the environment.

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Look for the

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featuring

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Lee Havis, Executive Director

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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 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.

Moment of Peril

by Lee Havis

LESSON PRESENTATION PROCEDURES

When the teacher notices that children seem to lose interest in her lengthy, full-detail lesson presentations with materials (see *Observer*, November 1999), she must certainly question the procedures she is using. You simply don't have to show every single step of a series of similar repetitive actions.

Many pieces of Montessori materials have similar objects to line up, sort and arrange according to some repetitive sequence of movements. If the teacher insists on showing every single detail of this order, the child who is watching will normally lose interest, as evident in the *moment of peril* here.

After the teacher shows two or three movements in the particular sequence, she should normally turn the materials over to the child with a phrase like "would you like to do the next one?" Then she can move away, and allow the child to concentrate and freely work with the materials on its own. If the teacher has shown how to take the materials from the shelf in the first part of the lesson, the child will usually know how to return them properly on its own without further intervention.

As the teacher shortens her lessons with materials in this way, she will then be more available to give the short, simple lessons with other children that are so much more effective. Best of all is a brief moment of eye contact with a child across the room, who then returns to its own goal-directed activity without a word or other action from the teacher.

The teacher will ultimately see that her occasional short lesson presentations with materials will generate more interest from the children who are watching — and help them proceed on their own with more normalized interaction with materials in the future.

Scheduling Work

This elementary Montessori teacher has helped her children identify topics and projects for work each day. However, the children still seem to forget her verbal directions and become distracted to other projects and interests that are neither well organized nor completed in good order.

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Marioara Popescue, IMS conference participant from Romania, observing children work at local area school after the IMS Montessori conference in Tampa, Florida (February 26-27, 2000)

HELP

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"...an adult with his useless assistance and hypnotic influence has substituted himself for a child and impeded his psychic growth."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.162

Traditional education helps children learn primarily to follow the teacher's instruction as it presents a pre-determined curriculum of specified subject matter. However, this type of assistance creates a useless dependency on the adult-child relationship — the child thereby being distracted away from its own normal self-creative development. When the child comes asking the teacher for help, the proper Montessori response is to re-direct the problem back to the child itself.

Asking for Help

"Some children...ask an adult for help...what seems to be an eager curiosity is in reality a means of keeping a person whom they need for support close at hand..."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Secret of Childhood*, p.161-62

Traditional teachers generally respond to a child's questions with too much information, giving their own complete answer to the question at hand. Montessori teaching however gives no such priority to answering questions — preferring instead to offer an indirect form of help that re-states the question, asks a further question, points out some factual aspect of the situation or otherwise offers some clue that allows the child to work through the problem more successfully on its own. The mixture of different ages, skills and interests in the Montessori classroom helps the child to work out its own solution, without the ordinary direct intervention of the teacher.

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FRENCH MONTESSORI WORKSHOP

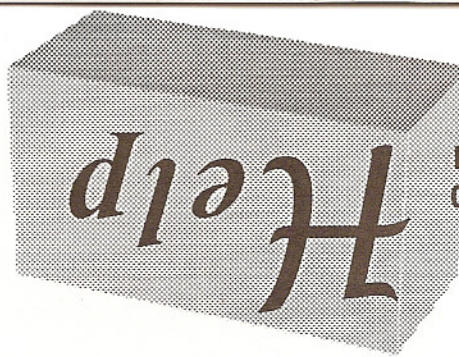
Cont'd. from Page 1, col. 3

with French translation and interpretation provided throughout the entire process. The workshop will combine two weekend conferences with a series of observation visits to local area bi-lingual Montessori schools. Participants will receive advance study materials and written assignments in French, to assure a substantial and successful result.

Havis believes that this type of intensive combination of conference, meetings, observations and written assignments may become a highly successful training model for the future. He stated "the key to success of this workshop approach is its close working relationship between local area schools for observation and the highly effective dynamics of the Society's two-day weekend conference. The workshop provides a very economical, simple and effective means of basic teacher preparation."

Havis indicated that participants who successfully complete this workshop will receive an IMS certification to acknowledge their completion of the workshop, and to confirm their partial completion of required coursework for full IMS credential as a recognized Montessori teacher. He stated that "workshop participants may complete further preparation coursework through correspondence and conferences on an individual basis at their own pace as they desire. I believe this will afford a very good basic education for Montessori teaching that will have a very positive impact on the whole field of Montessori teacher education."

For further information, contact: 514-990-6481 (en français), or IMS office, tel. 301-589-1127, for information in English



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Help — Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 2

Different Ages

"...children of different ages help one another. The younger ones see what the older ones are doing and ask for explanations."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Absorbent Mind*, p.226

The Montessori classroom is a community of different ages and interests that allows each child to successfully overcome many problems in a cooperative manner with others. Montessori education encourages this type of helpful social interaction — the teacher serving more as an observer of this positive mutual help in the group. The Montessori teacher helps this process by removing the obstacles that arise in the environment around each individual child.

Remove Obstacles

"...individuality... develops spontaneously, independently of us, and we can only help... and remove obstacles in his path of growth towards realization."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Ed. For a New World*, p.19

The Montessori teacher aims to remove the detrimental influences that arise around a single "hub" child — a *preparation of the environment* that must consider the detrimental effects of the "adult personality", "other children" and "physical objects". She must particularly remove the obstacle of her own *personality* — to restrain those various patterns of *negativity* or *abandonment* that can so easily arise with children. This process of *controlling the environment*, not the child gives us a light and lesson into the dynamics of human behavior — and a hope for a real solution to the many problems that exist in the larger context of adult society.

Light and Lesson

"...we can receive help from the child...the child can give us a light and a lesson, a new vision and a solution for inextricable problems."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Formation of Man*, p.43

The *normalized* child shows us how our true personality can emerge in harmony with laws of nature — a lesson to guide us towards greater peace, harmony and unity among all people in the world. Even misbehavior in children helps us see our own personality defects in projected form — and how we can correct such defects in light of the three fundamental Montessori principles. Adult and child therefore help each other in this *new education* that is so transforming the future of all humanity.

All Humanity

"The only way by which the individual may escape is that by which all humanity may be saved... help one another, or you will die."

Dr. Maria Montessori
from *Spontaneous Act. In Ed.*, p.277

As individuals, we affect each other by our actions each day — to ultimately either harm or help the well being and positive progress of all humanity. With the young child, our actions are even more impactful, because it will so completely adapt to what we do and say — forming within itself an intimate way of being to persist as its essential personality for life. By following Montessori principles, we help children reveal their own true nature — the *normalized* child thereby emerging to bring forth a whole new and better humanity in the world.

Tampa, Florida

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 2

Havis also indicated that Ms. Dorado from the Philippines expressed an interest in helping to expand Montessori educational opportunities in her country. He stated that "I hope we will be able to work more closely together in this matter; perhaps to hold an IMS conference there in the near future."

Moment of Peril

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The teacher recognizes that the children are not properly scheduling their work. However, she is not sure how to direct them in this process, to hold them accountable for successful results without imposing rigid written assignments.

What to do?

Answer in *Observer*, May 2000

Positions & Placements

School Principal for Shrewsbury Mountain school in Shrewsbury, Vermont. 94 students, grades K-6. Must value parental participation. Send letter of intent, resume, 3 current letters of recommendation, and transcripts to: Superintendent of Schools, Rutland South Supervisory Union, PO Box 87, North Clarendon, VT 05759

Positions for: Elementary/Middle School Head, Middle school teacher, upper elementary, Spanish (P/T). School located near downtown Manhattan, NY. Experience necessary. Fax resume and cover letter to Marica Gardere, Head of School, Brooklyn Heights Montessori School, (718) 858-0500 or (718) 858-5100.